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MODERN CONTINENTAL PLAYS

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PREFACE

A NECESSARILY brief introduction certainly offers no opportunity for any discussion of modern drama, even were such a discussion in order; but a few words are really needed to explain and to justify the contents of this volume.

At least four powerful influences have worked upon contemporary drama. *Realism*, with Ibsen as its dominating exponent, concerned itself largely with the interpretation of social phenomena. From this resulted not only "the play of ideas," but the "thesis," or "problem," play, and finally the "play of opinions," in which discussion replaces action. The thesis, or problem, play has apparently run its course, but the play of ideas is still active, and the later developments of realism are everywhere evident. *Naturalism*, beginning with Zola, developed by Becque, practiced most brilliantly by Hauptmann, was, together with the indigenous naturalism of the Russian dramatists, a phase that two decades ago received perhaps an undue amount of cultivation and that since, at least as a definite creed, has been unduly depreciated. *Symbolism*, represented chiefly by Maeterlinck, suggesting spiritual values by means of concrete signs, often with rare subtlety and beauty of style, has been less a distinct method than a pervading influence penetrating and coloring a large portion of contemporary drama. *Expressionism*, seeking the inner meaning of social and psychological phenomena and attempting to express it in terms of the abstract, was employed consciously, though without a label, by Strindberg, and now dominates the practice of certain German dramatists and has become an influence in America. Rather apart from these four, stands Romance, presistently manifesting itself, sometimes as a conscious reaction, more often simply as the inevitable expression of a perennial human instinct and desire.

Any dramaturgic method, in so far as it is practiced consciously and consistently, springs from some distinct philosophy of life and conception of the purpose and function of the drama, and each method evolves its characteristic technique. Each has its essential validity, but none holds the key to all the truth. The mistake lies in assuming that any one method is the only valid and final form of expression. Taken together, Realism, Naturalism, and Symbolism, with their many variants and combinations, have immensely enriched the resources of dramaturgy; and Expressionism is making a contribution that is at least interesting and that may prove of ultimate significance. To-day, Realism blends

with Symbolism, Naturalism with Expressionism, and their various "permutations and combinations" have moulded many a fine play.

The present tendency is against conventional rules of any kind and towards free and unlimited experimentation. The fundamental laws founded upon the conditions of the theatre and the psychological reactions of the audience doubtless still hold good, but certainly recent dramaturgic practice is bold and often seems chaotic. But by such fearless and irreverent experimentation technique is kept flexible. Strindberg was an experimenter; so were Wedekind and Andreyev; so are Pirandello, Kaiser, and O'Neill. Out of the chaos comes much that is meaningless and even absurd: mere rebellion against restraint is no sure sign of genius. But in general the result is interesting; sometimes it is clearly of intrinsic importance.

Whether free or restricted in technique, whether experimental or conventional, contemporary drama in its choice of material has been strongly influenced by current scientific and philosophic thought. Biology, sociology, analytic psychology have suggested new fields of exploration and have dictated new attitudes toward human phenomena. This fact is especially evident in the influence of psychoanalysis upon the treatment of character. Another influence, this time also upon technique and style, has emanated from the fine arts. This influence has worked in two ways. First, the play itself, as seen, for instance, in the work of D'Annunzio and Maeterlinck, has attempted to convey something of the impressions characteristic of music and painting and has thus rendered itself a more suggestive and subtle medium. Furthermore, the development of the resources of the stage has made the drama more than ever a synthesis of the arts, in which the play itself is supposed to be complemented by a stage *decor* that shall express its mood and provide an appropriate environment for its action.

Under such influence upon material, technique, and style, the plays included in the present collection were composed. Not over half a dozen of them belong to the past ten years but all are, in the strictest sense, contemporary. Most of them, though old enough to have acquired status, are not "old-fashioned," since they are above fashion; they are young enough to be in close touch with contemporary thought and feeling and yet are universal enough to embody much that seems of permanent validity. The most recent of them are at least representative and interesting, whatever their final significance may prove to be. Of the twenty dramatists on the editor's original list, all are represented except Pirandello and Martinez-Sierra, who were necessarily excluded by limitations of copyright. In the selection of the plays, the editor has

been guided by a few simple principles: that the plays should combine literary and theatric value; should present a variety of types of drama, kinds of technique, and style; and should, as far as possible, be the recognized masterpieces of their respective authors. Some substitutions, however, have been made in the case of the "recognized masterpieces," in order to introduce other, and perhaps no less excellent, plays; for instance, *The Rats*, by Hauptmann, instead of *The Weavers*, and *Comrades*, by Strindberg, instead of *The Father*.

S. S. Tenacity, by Vildrac, hitherto available only in magazine form, here appears in a new translation. *Phantasms*, by Bracco, and *Electra*, by Galdos, are also now printed for the first time in book form. *The Coral* and *Gas, Part II*, by Kaiser, have never before appeared in English, a special translation having been made for this volume. Several great plays that may be found in other collections—*Cyrano de Bergerac*, *Pelléas and Mélisande*, *The Cherry Orchard*, *The Lower Depths*, and *Beyond our Power*—have been included because no satisfactory substitute could be found for any one of them, and because all are indispensable to the student as well as to the general reader. Ibsen is not represented, since many of his best plays are now available in various inexpensive editions.

The Bibliography does not pretend to be inclusive; it is intended only as guide to set on his way any one who may wish to read and investigate further. The works on the theatre arts are included in the list because a play, however fine in its writing, is not complete until it takes shape on the stage; hence acting, directing, and scenic design must be considered in the creation of the composite art that is termed drama. Fortunately, an appendix is used or ignored as the tastes and needs of the reader may dictate; hence, save for the extra number of pages that it may entail, it perhaps requires no explanation or apology.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The present collection would, of course, not have been possible had not those who controlled the copyrights of the plays generously co-operated with the editor. In the case of plays already published in English, this co-operation involved the publishers and, sometimes, also the translators; in the case of plays unpublished in English, it involved the agents of the authors and, again, the translators. In addition to the publishers the editor wishes especially to thank the Theatre Guild of New York, Messrs. Brandt and Brandt, Dr. John G. Underhill, and Miss Winifred Katzin, the last-named of whom not only secured the three plays by Kaiser but made a special translation of two of them for this collection and otherwise gave generous aid. Dr. A. H. Quinn, the general editor of the series of which this volume forms a part, and Messrs. Harper and Brothers, the publishers, have co-operated in every way possible. Mr. Sidney Howard, Professor Alexander Dean of the Department of Drama at Yale, Professor S. A. Eliot of Smith College, Dr. Frank W. Chandler of the University of Cincinnati, and Mr. Frederick McConnell, director of The Play House of Cleveland, have supplied valuable information of various kinds. Mr. Barrett H. Clark has given most generously of his scholarship and of his knowledge of the theatre. Mr. Theodore Fuchs has worked so much on the book from its inception to its final proof-reading, and has contributed so much in so many ways, that his name should appear as co-editor.

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HE WHO GETS SLAPPED

By LEONID ANDREYEV

Translated from the Russian by GREGORY ZILBOORG

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LEONID ANDREYEV AND HIS PLAYS

Leonid Andreyev, the author of *He Who Gets Slapped,* was born in Orel, Russia, in 1871, and died in Finland, in 1919. His reputation was first established by his tales and short-stories. Maxim Gorki was his friend and literary god-father. Between 1905 and 1917 Andreyev wrote twenty-seven plays, singularly unequal in merit, but of which at least half a dozen may be considered masterpieces. During this prolific period of playwriting his fame eclipsed that of all other contemporary Russian dramatists, though his work owed not a little to the stimulus given to it by the plays of Gorki and of Tchekhov.

Andreyev's subject-matter is remarkably complex and varied. Much of it was undoubtedly suggested by the untoward conditions and the dreadful events of his own period. It was a time of wars and assassinations; of wretchedness among the peasantry; of unrest and pessimism in the world of thought. Andreyev lived in the midst of all this; it was a part of him; he could not escape from it. But in his plays, such as *Anathema* and *To the Stars,* he transmutes and universalizes these conditions and events and frees them from the limitations of time and place. He finds his material also within his own mind, a too-delicately poised and rather morbid mind, lodged in a body never free from ills. In the plays that spring primarily from this source are presented perplexing questions of ethics and personality, as in *The Black Maskers;* the gloomy pageant of man's life, as in *The Life of Man;* the deterioration of moral fibre under the impact of bitter and degrading experiences, as in *Katherina Ivanovna* and *He Who Gets Slapped.*

Andreyev's method of treatment takes as wide a range as his material; from convincing realism, as in *Katherina,* through allegorical abstraction, as in *The Life of Man,* and to the wildest fantasy, as in *The Black Maskers.* Whatever the method, symbolism is always present in greater or less degree, either symbolism in details or symbolism that informs and renders significant the action as a whole.

All Russian drama, maintained Andreyev, had touched only the surface of life, and had relied for its effect too much upon external action; hence his theory of a "panpsychic" theatre, a "theatre of the soul", which should represent primarily the inner action of the spirit. He asserts that the most dramatic thing in the world is Thought—and in this is imitative of Maeterlinck. Had he consistently written by this theory alone, his plays would have been purely static. Fortunately, his sheer talent as a story-teller provides enough external movement to hold the interest of the audience.

Undoubtedly, Andreyev's work was influenced by that of other dramatists—the Russians and, from the outside, Maeterlinck, at least, and in many respects it is imitative. Yet none the less it is both powerful and original. Such pictorial imagination, such variety of characterization and insight into the depths of complex characters, such strong, swiftly-moving plots, implying an inner action more significant than the external—are qualities that, in their totality, are perhaps nowhere excelled in modern drama. In all these traits *He Who Gets Slapped* is characteristic of Andreyev. For all its surface realism, the entire play is a symbol. The man of fine sensibilities and intelligence, cheated by life and betrayed by his friend, turns bitter, and revenges himself on the world by deliberately making himself a laughing-stock—and the world takes up his challenge and mocks him delightedly, thereby making itself more ridiculous than the clown himself. It has been said that the play is partly autobiographic, since Andreyev felt that his own ideas, like those of He, had been stolen and prostituted, and that, like the clown, he had been betrayed by his friends.

He Who Gets Slapped was first produced in 1915 in Moscow by the Moscow Art Theatre. Its first production in English was in London in 1921 under the title of *The Painted Laugh.* Under its present title it was repeated for a longer run in London in 1926. In the meantime it had been first produced in America by Alexander Dean, at the University of Montana, in 1921, with the Montana Masquers, Maurice Brown, and Ellen Van Volkenberg. In January, 1922, it was presented in New York by the Theatre Guild.

CHARACTERS

CONSUELO, *a bareback rider in a circus. Billed as "The Bareback Tango Queen"*
MANCINI, *Consuelo's father*
HE, *a clown in Briquet's circus. Billed as "HE, The One Who Gets Slapped"*
BRIQUET, *manager of the circus*
ZINIDA, *a lion tamer, Briquet's wife*
ALFRED BEZANO, *a bareback rider*
A GENTLEMAN
BARON REGNARD
JACKSON, *a clown*
TILLY, POLLY } *musical clowns*
THOMAS, ANGELICA, *and other actors and actresses of Briquet's circus.*

The action takes place in one of the large cities of France at the present day.

HE WHO GETS SLAPPED

ACT ONE

A very large, rather dirty room with whitewashed walls. To the left, in a niche, is a window, the only outside window in the room, opening on a court-yard. The light from it is so dim that even by day the electricity has to be turned on.

At the very top of the centre-back wall is a row of small dusty windows. They open on the circus hall. At night, when the performance is going on a bright light shines through. By day they are dark. In the same wall is a large white door, reached by two stone steps, and nailed fast.

On the right, almost in the corner, is a high, wide, arched doorway which leads to the stables and the ring. By day it opens into pale darkness, at night into pale light.

The room is used for many purposes. It is the office of Papa Briquet, manager of the circus; here he keeps his little desk. It is the cloak-room of some of the actors. It is also the room where the cast gathers between calls, during rehearsals or performances. Again, it is a checkroom for used circus property, such as gilt armchairs, scenery for pantomimes, and other wares of the circus household. The walls are covered with circus announcements and glaring posters.

The time is morning. In the circus hall a rehearsal is going on, and preparations are being made for the evening performance. As the curtain goes up, the cracking whip and the shouts of the riding-master are heard from the ring. The stage is empty for a few seconds, then enter Tilly and Polly, the musical clowns, practising a new march. Playing on tiny pipes, they step from the dark doorway to the window. Their music is agreeable to the ear, but small, mincing, artificially clown-like, like their mincing steps; they wear jackets and resemble each other; same smooth-shaven face, same height; Tilly, the younger, has a scarf around his neck; both have their derbies on the backs of their heads. Tilly glances through the window, then they turn about, still marching.

Polly [*interrupting the march*]. Stop, you're out again! Now listen—[*He stands close to* Tilly *and plays into his face.* Tilly *absent-mindedly listens, scratching his nose.*] There! Come on now! [*They resume their music and marching. As they reach the door they meet the manager and* Mancini; *the latter walks behind the manager, and is gnawing at the knob of his gold-mounted cane.* Count Mancini *is tall and slight. The seams of his clothes are worn and he keeps his coat buttoned tight. He assumes extremely graceful manners, takes affected poses, and has a special fondness for toying with his cane, with aristocratic stylishness. When he laughs, which happens often, his thin sharp face takes on a marked resemblance to a satyr. The manager,* "Papa" Briquet, *is a stout quiet man of average height. His bearing is hesitant. The clowns make room for the gentlemen. The manager looks questioningly at the older man.*]

Polly [*with an affected accent.*] Our moosic for the pantomime! The March of the Ants!

Briquet. Ha! Yes!

[*The gentlemen walk in. The clowns resume their music,* Polly *marching on, then turning, the younger following.*]

Polly. Papa Briquet, Jack is working very badly to-day.

Briquet. What's the matter with him?

Polly. He has a sore throat. You'd better take a look at him.

Briquet. All right. Come on, Jack. Open your mouth! Wider—wider. [*Turns clown's face to the light near the window and examines him closely and seriously.*] Just smear it with iodine.

Polly. I told him so. I said it was nothing! Oh! Come on. [*They go away playing, marching, practising their funny mincing steps. The manager sits down.* Man-

CINI *strikes a pose by the wall, smiling ironically.*]

Mancini. So. You give them medical treatment, too! Look out, Papa Briquet, you have no licence.

Briquet. Just a little advice. They're all so afraid for their lives.

Mancini. His throat is simply burnt with whiskey. These two fellows get drunk every night. I am amazed, Papa Briquet, to see you pay so little attention to their morals. [*He laughs.*]

Briquet. You make me sick, Mancini.

Mancini. Count Mancini is at your service!

Briquet. You make me sick, Count Mancini. You poke your nose into everything, you disturb the artists in their work. Some day you'll get a thrashing, and I warn you that I shan't interfere.

Mancini. As a man of superior associations and education I cannot be expected to treat your actors as my equals! What more can you ask, Briquet? You see that I do you the honour of speaking with you quite familiarly, quite simply.

Briquet. Ha! ha! ha! [*Slightly threatening*] Really!—

Mancini. Never mind my joke. What if they did dare attack me—ever seen this, Briquet? [*He draws a stiletto out of his cane and advances it silently.*] Useful little thing. By the way, you have no idea of the discovery I made yesterday in a suburb. Such a girl! [*Laughs.*] Oh, well! all right, all right—I know you don't like that sort of sport. But look here, you must give me a hundred francs!

Briquet. Not a sou.

Mancini. Then I'll take away Consuelo —that's all—

Briquet. Your daily threat!

Mancini. Yes, my threat! And you would do the same, if you were as shamefully hard up as I am. Now look here, you know as well as I do that I have to live up to my name somehow, keep up the family reputation. Just because the tide of ill-fortune which struck my ancestors compelled me to make my daughter, the Countess Veronica, a bareback rider—to keep us from starving —do you understand—you heartless idiot!

Briquet. You chase the girls too much! Some day you'll land in jail, Mancini!

Mancini. In jail? Oh, no! Why, I have to uphold our *name,* the splendour of my family [*laughs*], haven't I? The Mancinis are known all over Italy for their love of girls—just girls! Is it my fault if I must pay such crazy prices for what my ancestors got free of charge? You're nothing but an ass, a *parvenu* ass. How can you understand Family Traditions? I don't drink—I stopped playing cards after that accident—no, you need not smile. Now if I give up the girls, what will be left of Mancini? Only a coat of arms, that's all—In the name of family traditions, give me a hundred francs!

Briquet. I told you no, I won't.

Mancini. You know that I leave half of the salary for Consuelo—but—perhaps you think I do not love my child—my only daughter, all that remains to me as a memory of her sainted mother—what cruelty! [*Pretends to cry, wipes his eyes with a small and dirty lace handkerchief, embroidered with a coronet.*]

Briquet. Why don't you say, rather, that she is foolish enough to give you half her salary. You make me sick—

[*Enter* ZINIDA, *the lion tamer; burningly beautiful, her self-confident, commanding gestures at first glance give an impression of languor. She is* BRIQUET'S *unmarried wife.*]

Zinida [*to* MANCINI]. Good morning.

Mancini. Madame Zinida! This barbarian, this brute may pierce me with his dagger, but I cannot control the expression of my love! [*Kneels facetiously before her*] Madame! Count Mancini has the honour of asking you to be his wife. . . .

Zinida [*to* BRIQUET]. Money?

Briquet. Yes.

Zinida. Don't give him any. [*Sits down wearily on a torn sofa, shuts her eyes.* MANCINI *gets up and wipes his knees.*]

Mancini. Duchess! Don't be cruel. I am no lion, no tiger, no savage beast which you are accustomed to tame. I am merely a poor domestic animal, who wants, miaow, miaow a little green grass.

Zinida [*without opening her eyes*]. Jim tells me you have a teacher for Consuelo. What for?

Mancini. The solicitude of a father, duchess, the solicitude and the tireless anxiety of a loving heart. The extreme misfortunes of our family, when I was a child,

have left some flaws in her education. Friends, the daughter of Count Mancini, Countess Veronica, can barely read! Is that admissible? And you, Briquet, heartless brute, you still ask why I need money!

Zinida. Artful!

Briquet. What are you teaching her?

Mancini. Everything. A student had been giving her lessons, but I threw him out yesterday. He had the nerve to fall in love with Consuelo and stood there miaowing at the door like a cat. Everything, Briquet, that you don't know—literature, mythology, orthography—

[*Two young actresses appear, with small fur coats thrown over their light dresses. They are tired and sit down in the corner.*]

Mancini. I do not wish my daughter—

Zinida. Artful!

Briquet. You are stupid, Mancini. What do you do it for? [*In a didactic tone*] You are fearfully stupid, Mancini. Why does she need to learn? Since she is here she need never know anything about that life. Don't you understand? What is geography? If I were the government I would forbid artists to read books. Let them read the posters, that's enough.

[*During* BRIQUET'S *speech, the two clowns and another actor enter. They sit down wearily.*]

Briquet. Right now, your Consuelo is an excellent artist, but just as soon as you teach her mythology, and she begins to read, she'll become a nuisance, she'll be corrupted, and then she'll go and poison herself. I know those books, I've read 'em myself. All they teach is corruption, and how to kill oneself.

First Actress. I love the novels that come out in the newspaper.

Briquet. That shows what a foolish girl you are. You'll be done for in no time. Believe me, my friends, we must forget entirely what is happening out there. How can we understand all that goes on there?

Mancini. You are an enemy of enlightenment, you are an obscurantist, Briquet.

Briquet. And you are stupid. You are from out there. What has it taught you? [*The actors laugh.*] If you'd been born in a circus as I was, you'd *know* something. Enlightenment is plain nonsense—nothing else. Ask Zinida. She knows everything they teach out there—geography, mythology—Does it make her any happier? You tell them, dear.

Zinida. Leave me alone, Louis.

Mancini [*angrily*]. Oh! Go to the devil! When I listen to your asinine philosophy, I'd like to skin you for more than a paltry hundred francs—for two hundred—for a thousand. Great God! What an ass of a manager! Yes, right before every one of them I want to say that you are a stingy old skinflint—that you pay starvation wages. I'll make you give Consuelo a raise of a hundred francs. Listen, all you honest vagabonds, tell me—who is it draws the crowd that fills the circus every night? You? a couple of musical donkeys? Tigers, lions? Nobody cares for those hungry cats!

Zinida. Leave the tigers alone.

Mancini. Beg your pardon, Zinida. I did not mean to hurt your feelings—honestly. I really marvel at your furious audacity—at your grace—you are a heroine—I kiss your tiny hands. But what do they understand about heroism? [*An orchestra softly plays the Tango in the circus. He continues with enthusiasm.*] Hear! hear! Now tell me, honest vagabonds, who but Consuelo and Bezano draws the crowds! That Tango on horseback—it is—it is—Oh, the devil! Even his fatuousness the Pope could not withstand its lure.

Polly. True! It's a great trick—wasn't the idea Bezano's?

Mancini. Idea! Idea! The lad's in love, like a cat—that's the idea. What's the good of an idea without a woman! You wouldn't dance very far with your idea alone, eh, Papa Briquet?

Briquet. We have a contract.

Mancini. Such base formalities.

Zinida. Give him ten francs and let him go.

Mancini. Ten! Never! *Fifteen!* Don't be stubborn, Papa. For the traditions of my house—twenty. I swear—on my honour—I can't do with less. [BRIQUET *hands him twenty francs. Nonchalantly*] *Merci.* Thanks.

Zinida. Why don't you take it from your baron?

Mancini [*raising his eyebrows haughtily, quite indignant*]. From the Baron?

Woman! who do you think I am that I should be beholden to a stranger?

Zinida. You're plotting something artful. I know you very little, but I guess you're an awful scoundrel.

Mancini [*laughs*]. Such an insult from such beautiful lips.

[*Enter an "artist," apparently an athlete.*]

Athlete. Papa Briquet, there's a gentleman from beyond the grave asking for you.

Actress. A ghost?

Athlete. No. He seems alive. Did you ever see a drunken ghost?

Briquet. If he's drunk, tell him I'm out, Thomas. Does he want to see me or the Count?

Athlete. No, you. Maybe he's not drunk, but just a ghost.

Mancini [*draws himself together, puffs up*]. A society man?

Athlete. Yes. I'll tell him to come in.

[*One hears the whip cracking in ring. The Tango sounds very low and distant—then comes nearer—louder. Silence.*]

Briquet [*touching* ZINIDA'S *arm*]. Tired?

Zinida [*drawing back a little*]. No.

Polly. Your red lion is nervous to-day, Zinida!

Zinida. You shouldn't tease him.

Polly. I played a melody from Traviata for him. And he sang with me. Wouldn't that be a good trick to stage, Papa Briquet?

[THOMAS *brings in the gentleman, points out the manager, and goes heavily away. The gentleman is not young, and he is ugly, but his rather strange face is bold and lively. He wears an expensive overcoat, with a fur collar, and holds his hat and gloves in his hand.*]

The Gentleman [*bowing and smiling*]. Have I the pleasure of addressing the manager?

Briquet. Yes. Won't you sit down, please? Tilly, bring a chair.

Gentleman. Oh! Don't trouble. [*Looks around.*] These are your artists? Very glad—

Mancini [*straightening and bowing slightly*]. Count Mancini.

Gentleman [*surprised*]. Count?

Briquet [*indefinitely*]. Yes, Count. And whom have I the honour of—

Gentleman. I don't quite know myself—yet. As a rule you chose your own names, don't you? I have not chosen yet. Later you might advise me about it. I have an idea already, but I am afraid it sounds too much like literature—you know.

Briquet. Literature?

Gentleman. Yes! Too sophisticated. [*They all look surprised.*] I presume these two gentlemen are clowns? I am so glad. May I shake hands with them? [*Stands up and shakes hands with clowns, who make silly faces.*]

Briquet. Excuse me—but what can I do for you?

Gentleman [*with the same pleasant, confident smile*]. Oh. You do something for me? No. I want to do something for you, Papa Briquet.

Briquet. Papa Briquet? But you don't look like . . .

Gentleman [*reassuringly*]. It's all right. I shall become "like." These two gentlemen just made remarkable faces. Would you like to see me imitate them? Look! [*He makes the same silly faces as the clowns.*]

Briquet. Yes! [*Involuntarily.*] You are not drunk, sir?

Gentleman. No. I don't drink as a rule. Do I look drunk?

Polly. A little.

Gentleman. No—I don't drink. It is a peculiarity of my talent.

Briquet [*familiarly*]. Where did you work before? Juggler?

Gentleman. No. But I am glad you feel in me a comrade, Papa Briquet. Unfortunately I am not a juggler, and have worked nowhere—I am—just so.

Mancini. But you look like a society man.

Gentleman. Oh, you flatter me, Count. I am just so.

Briquet. Well, what do you want? You see I am obliged to tell you that everything is taken.

Gentleman. That's immaterial. I want to be a clown, if you will allow me. [*Some of the actors smile,* BRIQUET *begins to grow angry.*]

Briquet. But what can you do? You're asking too much. What can you do?

Gentleman. Why! Nothing! Isn't that funny! I can't do a thing.

Briquet. No, it's not funny. Any scoundrel knows that much.

Gentleman [*rather helpless, but still smiling and looking around*]. We can invent something—

Briquet [*ironically*]. From literature?

[*The clown* JACKSON *enters slowly without being noticed by the others. He stands behind the gentlemen.*]

Gentleman. Yes, one can find something literary, too. A nice little speech for instance on, let's say, a religious topic. Something like a debate among the clowns.

Briquet. A debate! The devil! This is no academy.

Gentleman [*sadly*]. I am very sorry. Something else then. Perhaps a joke about the creation of the world and its rulers?

Briquet. What about the police? No, no—nothing like that!

Jackson [*coming forward*]. The rulers of the world? You don't like them? I don't either. Shake.

Briquet [*introducing*]. Our chief clown, the famous Jackson.

Gentleman [*enthusiastically*]. Great heavens—you! Allow me to shake hands with you heartily! You, with your genius, you have given me so much joy!

Jackson. I'm glad indeed!

Briquet [*shrugs his shoulders; to* JACKSON.] He wants to be a clown! Look him over, Jim.

[JACKSON *makes a motion at which the gentleman hurriedly removes his coat and throws it on a chair. He is ready for the examination.* JACKSON *turns him round, looking him over critically.*]

Jackson. Clown? Hm! Turn round then. Clown? Yes? Now smile. Wider—broader—do you call that a smile? So—that's better. There is something, yes—but for full development—[*Sadly.*] Probably you can't even turn a somersault?

Gentleman [*sighs*]. No.

Jackson. How old are you?

Gentleman. Thirty-nine. Too late?

[JACKSON *moves away with a whistle. There is a silence.*]

Zinida [*softly*]. Take him.

Briquet [*indignant*]. What the hell shall I do with him if he doesn't know a thing? He's drunk!

Gentleman. Honestly, I am not. Thank you for your support, Madame. Are you not the famous Zinida, the lion tamer, whose regal beauty and audacity ——

Zinida. Yes. But I do not like flattery.

Gentleman. It is not flattery.

Mancini. You are evidently not accustomed to good society, my dear. Flattery? This gentleman expresses his admiration in sincere and beautiful words—and you—you are not educated, Zinida. As for myself—

[*Enter* CONSUELO *and* BEZANO *in circus costume.*]

Consuelo. You here, Daddy?

Mancini. Yes, my child, you are not tired? [*Kisses her on the forehead.*] My daughter, sir, Countess Veronica. Known on the stage as Consuelo, The Bareback Tango Queen. Did you ever see her?

Gentleman. I have enjoyed her work. It is marvellous!

Mancini. Yes! Of course. Everyone admits it. And how do you like the name, Consuelo? I took it from the novel of George Sand. It means "Consolation."

Gentleman. What a wonderful knowledge of books!

Mancini. A small thing. Despite your strange intention, I can see, sir, that you are a gentleman. My peer! Let me explain to you, that only the strange and fatal misfortunes of our ancient family—"*sic transit gloria mundi*," sir ——

Consuelo. It's a bore, Daddy—Where's my handkerchief, Alfred?

Bezano. Here it is.

Consuelo [*showing the handkerchief to the gentleman*]. Genuine Venetian. Do you like it?

Gentleman [*again bowing*]. My eyes are dazzled! How beautiful! Papa Briquet, the more I look round me the more I want to stay with you. [*Makes the face of a simpleton.*] On the one hand a count, on the other—Jackson [*nods approval*]. That's not bad. Look here, think a bit—

find something. Everyone here thinks for himself.

[*Silence. The gentleman stands with a finger on his forehead, thinking*].

Gentleman. Find something—find something . . . Eureka!

Polly. That means *found.* Come!

Gentleman. Eureka—I shall be among you, he who gets slapped.

[*General laughter. Even* BRIQUET *smiles.*]

Gentleman [*looks at them smiling*]. You see I made even you laugh—is that easy? [*All grow serious.* POLLY *sighs.*]

Tilly. No, it's not easy. Did you laugh, Polly?

Polly. Sure, a lot. Did you?

Tilly. I did. [*Imitating an instrument, he plays with his lips a melody at once sad and gay.*]

Jackson. "He Who Gets Slapped," that's not bad.

Gentleman. It's not, is it? I rather like it myself. It suits my talent. And comrades, I have even found a name—you'll call me "HE." Is that all right?

Jackson [*thinking*]. "HE"—Not bad.

Consuelo [*in a singing, melodic voice*]. "HE" is so funny—"HE"—like a dog. Daddy, are there such dogs?

[JACKSON *suddenly gives a circus slap to the gentleman.* HE *steps back and grows pale.*]

Gentleman. What!—[*General laughter covers his exclamation.*]

Jackson. HE, Who Gets Slapped. Or didn't you get it?

Polly [*comically*]. He says he wants more—

[*The gentleman smiles, rubbing his cheek.*]

Gentleman. So sudden.—Without waiting.—How funny—you didn't hurt me, and yet my cheek burns.

[*Again there is loud laughter. The clowns cackle like ducks, hens, cocks; they bark.* ZINIDA *says something to* BRIQUET, *casts a glance toward* BEZANO, *and goes out.* MANCINI *assumes a bored air and looks at his watch. The two actresses go out.*]

Jackson. Take him, Papa Briquet—he will push us.

Mancini [*again looking at his watch*]. But bear in mind, that Papa Briquet is as close as Harpagon. If you expect to get good money here you are mistaken. [HE laughs.] A slap? What's a slap? Worth only small change, a franc and a half a dozen. Better go back to society; you will make more money there. Why for one slap, just a light tap, you might say, my friend, Marquis Justi, was paid fifty thousand lire!

Briquet. Shut up, Mancini. Will you take care of him, Jackson?

Jackson. I can.

Polly. Do you like music? A Beethoven sonata played on a broom, for instance, or Mozart on a bottle?

He. Alas! No. But I will be exceedingly grateful if you will teach me. A clown! My childhood's dream. When all my school friends were thrilled by Plutarch's heroes, or the light of science—I dreamed of clowns. Beethoven on a broom, Mozart on bottles! Just what I have sought all my life! Friends, I must have a costume!

Jackson. I see you don't know much! A costume [*putting his finger on his forehead*] is a thing which calls for long deep thought. Have you seen my Sun here? [*Strikes his posterior.*] I looked for it two years.

He [*enthusiastically*]. I shall think!

Mancini. It is time for me to go. Consuelo, my child, you must get dressed. [*To* HE.] We are lunching with Baron Regnard, a friend of mine, a banker.

Consuelo. But I don't want to go, Daddy. Alfred says I must rehearse today.

Mancini [*horrified, holding up his hands*]. Child, think of me, and what a situation you put me in! I promised the Baron, the Baron expects us. Why, it is impossible! Oh, I am in a cold sweat.

Consuelo. Alfred says——

Bezano [*drily*]. She has to work. Are you rested? Then come on.

Mancini. But—the devil take me if I know what to make of it. Hey, Bezano, bareback rider! Are you crazy? I gave you permission for Art's sake, to exercise my daughter's talent—and you—

Consuelo. Go along, Papa, and don't be so silly. We've got to work, haven't we?

Have lunch alone with your Baron. And Daddy, you forgot to take a clean handkerchief again, and I washed two for you yesterday. Where did you put them?

Mancini [*ashamed, blushing*]. Why, my linen is washed by the laundress, and you, Consuelo, are still playing with toys. It is stupid! You're a chatter-box. You don't think. These gentlemen might imagine Heaven knows what. How stupid. I'm off.

Consuelo. Do you want me to write him a little note?

Mancini [*angrily*]. A little note? Your little notes would make a horse laugh! Good-bye.

[*He goes out toying angrily with his cane. The clowns follow him respectfully, playing a funeral march.* He *and* Jackson *laugh. The actors disappear one by one.*]

Consuelo [*laughing*]. Do I really write so badly? And I love so to write. Did you like my note, Alfred—or did you laugh, too?

Bezano [*blushing*]. No, I did not. Come on, Consuelo.

[*They go, and meet* Zinida, *entering.* Consuelo *passes on.*]

Zinida. Are you going back to work, Bezano?

Bezano [*politely*]. Yes. To-day is a very bad day. How are your lions, Zinida? I think the weather affects them.

Consuelo [*from the ring*]. Alfred!

Zinida. Yes. Some one is calling you. You'd better go. [Alfred *goes out. To* Briquet.] Are you finished?

Briquet. Right away.

Jackson. Then good-bye till evening. Think about your costume, He, and I shall look for some idea, too. Be here at ten to-morrow. Don't be late, or you'll get another slap. And I'll work with you.

He. I shall not be late. [He *looks after* Jackson, *who goes out.*] Must be a nice man. All the people about you are so nice, Papa Briquet. I suppose that good-looking bareback rider is in love with Consuelo, isn't he? [*Laughs.*]

Zinida. It's none of your business. For a newcomer you go poking your nose too far. How much does he want, Papa?

Briquet. Just a minute. See here, He. I don't want to make a contract with you.

He. Just as you please. Do you know what? Don't let us talk about money. You are an honest fellow, Briquet; you will see what my work is worth to you, and then—

Briquet [*pleased*]. Now that's very nice of you. Zinida, the man really doesn't know anything.

Zinida. Well, do as he suggests. Now we must write it down. Where's the book?

Briquet Here. [*To* He.] I don't like to write [*gives book to* Zinida], but we have to put down the names of the actors, you know—it's police regulations. Then if anyone kills himself, or——

[*Again comes the sound of the Tango, and calls from the ring.*]

Zinida. What is your name?

He [*smiling*]. He. I chose it, you know. Or don't you like it?

Briquet. We like it all right—but we have to have your real name. Have you a passport?

He [*confused*]. A passport? No, I have none. Or, rather, yes. I have something of the kind, but I had no idea the rules were strictly enforced here. What do you need papers for?

[Zinida *and* Briquet *look at each other.* Zinida *pushes the book aside.*]

Zinida. Then we can't take you. We cannot quarrel with the police, just on your account.

Briquet. She is my wife. I hadn't told you. She's right. You might get hurt by a horse, or hurt yourself—or do something. We don't know you, you see. I personally don't care, but out there, it's different, you see. For me a corpse is just a corpse—and I don't ask anything about him. It's up to God or the Devil. But they—they're too curious. Well, I suppose it's necessary for order. I don't know—Got a card?

He [*rubs his head, thinking*]. What shall I do? I have my card, but [*smiles*] you understand that I don't want my name to be known.

Briquet. Some story, hey?

He. Yes, something like that. Why can't you imagine that I have no name? Can't I lose it as I might lose my hat? Or let some one else take it by mistake? When

a stray dog comes to you, you don't ask his name—you simply give him another. Let me be that dog. [*Laughing.*] He—the Dog!

Zinida. Why don't you tell us your name, just the two of us? Nobody else need know it. Unless you should break your neck—

He [*hesitates*]. Honestly? [Zinida *shrugs her shoulders.*]

Briquet. Where people are honest, their word is good. One sees you come from out there.

He. All right. But please, don't be surprised. [*Gives* Zinida *his card. She looks at it, then hands it to* Briquet, *then both look at* He.]

Briquet. If it is true, sir, that you are really what is written here—

He. For heaven's sake—for heaven's sake—this does not exist, but was lost long ago; it is just a check for an old hat. I pray you to forget it, as I have. I am He Who Gets Slapped—nothing else. [*Silence.*]

Briquet. I beg your pardon, sir, but I must ask you again, I must humbly ask you—are you not drunk, sir? There is something in your eye—something—

He. No, no. I am He Who Gets Slapped. Since when do you speak to me like this, Papa Briquet? You offend me.

Zinida. After all, it's his business, Briquet. [*She hides the card.*] Truly you are a strange man. [*Smiles.*] And you have already noticed that Bezano is in love with the horse-girl? And that I love my Briquet, did you notice that, too?

He [*also smiling*]. Oh, yes. You adore him.

Zinida. I adore him. Now go with him, Briquet, show him the ring and the stables—I have something to write.

He. Yes, yes, please. I am so happy. At last you have taken me, haven't you? It is true—you're not joking. The circus, the tan-bark, the ring in which I shall run getting my slaps. Yes, yes, Briquet, let's go. Until I feel the sawdust under my feet, I shall not believe it.

Briquet. All right then. [*Kisses* Zinida]. Come on.

Zinida. Just a minute—He! Answer me a question. I have a man who takes care of the cages, a plain fellow whom nobody knows. He just clears the cages, you know; he walks in and out whenever he wants to, without even looking at the lions, as if he were perfectly at home. Why is that so? Nobody knows him, everybody knows me, everyone is afraid for me, while—And he is such a silly man—you will see him. [*Laughs.*] But don't you think of entering the cage yourself! My red one would give you such a slap!

Briquet [*displeased*]. There you are again Zinida—stop it.

Zinida [*laughs*]. All right—go. Oh yes, Louis, send me Bezano. I have to settle an account with him.

[He *and the director go out.* Zinida *looks at the card once more, then hides it. She gets up and walks quickly up and down the room. She stops to listen to the Tango, which ends abruptly. Then she stands motionless, looking straight at the dark opening of the door through which* Bezano *comes.*]

Bezano [*entering*]. You called me, Zinida? What do you want? Tell me quickly, I have no time——

[Zinida *looks at him silently.* Bezano *flushes with anger, and knits his eyebrows. He turns to the door to go.*]

Zinida. Bezano!

Bezano [*stops, without looking up*]. What do you want? I have no time.

Zinida. Bezano! I keep hearing people say that you are in love with Consuelo. Is it true?

Bezano [*shrugging his shoulders*]. We work well together.

Zinida [*takes a step forward*]. No—Tell me, Alfred, do you love her?

Bezano [*flushes like a boy, but looks straight into* Zinida's *eyes. Proudly*]. I do not love anybody. No, I love nobody. How can I? Consuelo? She is here to-day, gone to-morrow, if her father should take her away. And I? Who am I? An acrobat, the son of a Milanese shoemaker—— She! I cannot even talk about it. Like my horses I have no words. Who am I to love?

Zinida. Do you love me? A little?

Bezano. No. I told you before.

Zinida. Still no? Not even a little?

Bezano [*after a silence*]. I am afraid of you.

Zinida [*wants to cry out, indignantly, but masters herself and lowers her eyes, as if in an effort to shut out their light; turns pale*]. Am I . . . so terrifying a woman—

Bezano. You are beautiful, like a queen. You are almost as beautiful as Consuelo. But I don't like your eyes. Your eyes command me to love you—and I don't like to be commanded. I am afraid of you.

Zinida. Do I command, Bezano? No—only implore.

Bezano. Then why not look at me straight? Now I have it. You know yourself that your eyes cannot implore. [*Laughs.*] Your lions have spoiled you.

Zinida. My red lion loves me——

Bezano. Never! If he loves you, why is he so sad?

Zinida. Yesterday he was licking my hands like a dog.

Bezano. And this morning he was looking for you to devour you. He thrusts out his muzzle and looks out, as if he sees only you. He is afraid of you, and he hates you. Or do you want me to lick your hands too, like a dog?

Zinida. No, Alfred, but I—I want to kiss your hand. [*With passion.*] Give it to me!

Bezano [*severely*]. I am ashamed to listen to you when you speak like that.

Zinida [*controlling herself*]. One should not torture another as you torture me. Alfred, I love you. No, I do not command. Look into my eyes—I love you.

[*Silence.*]

Bezano [*turns to go*]. Good-bye.

Zinida. Alfred——

[He *appears in the doorway, and stops.*]

Bezano. Please never tell me any more that you love. I don't want it. Otherwise I will quit. You pronounce the word as if you were cracking me with your whip. You know it is disgusting——

[*He turns brusquely and goes. Both notice* He; Bezano, *frowning, passes out quickly.* Zinida *returns to her place at the desk, with a proudly indifferent expression.*]

He [*coming in*]. I beg your pardon, but I——

Zinida. There you are again, poking your nose into everything, He. Do you really want a slap?

He [*laughing*]. No. I simply forgot my overcoat. I didn't hear anything.

Zinida. I don't care whether you did or not.

He. May I take my coat?

Zinida. Take it if it's yours. Sit down, He.

He. I am sitting down.

Zinida. Now tell me, He, could you love me?

He [*laughing*]. I? I and Love! Look at me, Zinida. Did you ever see a lover with such a face?

Zinida. One can succeed with such a face——

He. That's because I am happy—because I lost my hat—because I am drunk—or perhaps I am not drunk. But I feel as dizzy as a young girl at her first ball. It is so nice here—slap me, I want to play my part. Perhaps it will awaken love in my heart, too. Love—[*as if listening to his own heart with pretended terror*] do you know—I feel it!

[*In the circus the Tango is played again.*]

Zinida [*listening too*]. For me?

He. No. I don't know. For everyone. [*Listens to the music.*] Yes, they are dancing—how beautiful Consuelo is—and how beautiful is the youth. He has the body of a Greek God; he looks as if he had been modeled by Praxiteles. Love! Love! [*Silence, music.*]

Zinida. Tell me, He——

He. At your service, Queen!

Zinida. He, what shall I do, to make my lions love me?

ACT TWO

The same room, during the evening performance. Occasional music, laughter, shrieks, and applause are audible. Through the small windows, back centre, the light is shining.

Consuelo *and* Baron Regnard *occupy the stage;* Consuelo *wears her stage costume; she sits with her feet on the sofa, a small shawl covering her shoulders. Before her stands the* Baron, *a tall stout man in evening dress, a rose in his buttonhole; grasping the ground with feet well apart,*

he gazes at her with convex spider-like eyes.

Baron. Is it true that your father, the Count, has introduced you to a certain Marquis Justi, a very rich man?

Consuelo [*surprised*]. No, he is only joking. I have often heard him speak of a Marquis Justi but I have never seen him

---

Baron. And do you know that your father is just a charlatan?

Consuelo. Oh! Don't say that—Father is such a dear.

Baron. Did you like the jewels?

Consuelo. Yes, very much. I was very sorry when Father told me I must return them. He said it would not be nice for me to keep them. I even cried a little about it.

Baron. Your father is only a beggar and a charlatan.

Consuelo. Oh, no, don't scold him—he loves you so much.

Baron. Let me kiss your hand——

Consuelo. Oh, no, it isn't proper! One may kiss the hand only when one says how do you do or good-bye. But in the meantime you can't.

Baron. Everybody is in love with you, that is why you and your father make such a fuss about yourselves. Who is that new clown they call He? I don't like him, he's too shrewd a beast. . . . Is he in love with you, too? I noticed the way he looked at you. . . .

Consuelo [*laughing*]. Nothing of the kind. He is so funny! He got fifty-two slaps yesterday. We counted them. Think of it, fifty-two slaps! Father said, "if they had only been gold pieces."

Baron. And Bezano, Consuelo. . . . Do you like him?

Consuelo. Yes, very much. He is so good-looking. He says that Bezano and I are the most beautiful couple in the world. He calls him Adam, and me Eve. But that's improper, isn't it? He is *so* improper.

Baron. And does He speak to you very often?

Consuelo. Yes, often. . . . But I don't understand him. It seems as if he were drunk.

Baron. "Consuelo"! . . . It means in Spanish . . . Consolation. Your father is an ass. . . . Consuelo, I love you.

Consuelo. Talk it over with Father.

Baron [*angry*]. Your father is a swindler and a charlatan. He should be turned over to the police. Don't you understand that I *cannot* marry you?

Consuelo. But Father says you can. . . .

Baron. No, I cannot. And what if I shoot myself? Consuelo, silly girl, I love you unbearably . . . unbearably, do you understand? I am probably mad . . . and must be taken to a doctor, yanked about, beaten with sticks. Why do I love you so much, Consuelo?

Consuelo. Then, you'd better marry.

Baron. I have had a hundred women, beauties, but I didn't see them. You are the first and I don't see any one else. Who strikes man with love, God or the Devil? The Devil struck me. Let me kiss your hand.

Consuelo. No. [*She thinks a while and sighs.*]

Baron. Do you think sometimes? What are you thinking about now, Consuelo?

Consuelo [*with another sigh*]. I don't know why, I just felt sorry for Bezano [*sighs again*]: He is so nice to me when he teaches me . . . and he has such a tiny little room.

Baron [*indignant*]. You were there?

Consuelo. No. He told me about it. [*Smiling.*] Do you hear the noise in there? That's He getting slapped. Poor thing . . . although I know it doesn't hurt, it's only make-believe. The intermission is coming soon.

[*The* Baron *throws away his cigar, takes two quick steps forward, and falls on his knees before the girl.*]

Baron. Consuelo——

Consuelo. Please, don't. Get up. Please leave my hand alone.

Baron. Consuelo!

Consuelo [*disgusted*]. Get up please, it's disgusting—you're so fat.

[*The* Baron *gets up. Voices are heard near the door and in the ring. It is the intermission. The clowns come first, talking cheerfully and excitedly.* He *leads them, in his clown's dress, with painted eyebrows and white nose;*

the others are applauding him. Voices of the actors calling: "Bravo! HE." *Then come the actors and actresses, riding-masters, and the rest, all in costume.* ZINIDA *is not among them.* PAPA BRIQUET *comes a little later.*]

Polly. A hundred slaps! Bravo, HE!

Jackson. Not bad, not bad at all. You'll make a career.

Tilly. He was the Professor to-day, and we were the students. Here goes another!

[*Gives him a clown's slap. Laughter. All bid good evening to the* BARON. *He is politely rude to these vagabonds who bore him, and remains silent. They seem quite used to it. Enter* MANCINI. *He is the same, and with the same cane.*]

Mancini [*shaking hands*]. What a success, Baron—and think of it—how the crowd does love slaps. [*Whispering.*] Your knees are dusty, Baron, brush them off. The floor is very dirty in here. [*Aloud.*] Consuelo, dear child, how do you feel? [*Goes over to his daughter. Sound of laughing, chattering. The waiters from the buffet in the lobby bring in soda and wine.* CONSUELO'S *voice is heard.*]

Consuelo. And where is Bezano?

He [*bows before the baron, affecting intimacy*]. You do not recognize me, Baron?

Baron. Yes I do. You are the clown, HE.

He. Yes I am HE Who Gets Slapped. May I presume to ask you, Baron, did you get your jewels back?

Baron. What!

He. I was asked to return some jewels to you, and I take the liberty of ——

[*The* BARON *turns his back on him* —HE *laughs loudly.*]

Jackson. Whiskey and soda! Believe me, ladies and gents, HE will surely make a career. I am an old clown, and I know the crowd. Why to-day, he even eclipsed *me*—and clouds have covered my Sun. [*Striking it.*] They do not like puzzles, they want slaps! They are longing for them and dreaming about them in their homes. Your health, HE! Another whiskey and soda! HE got so many slaps to-day, there would be enough to go round the whole orchestra!

Tilly. I bet there wouldn't! [*To* JACKSON.] Shake!

Polly. I bet there wouldn't—I'll go and count the old mugs.

A Voice. The orchestra did not laugh ——

Jackson. Because they were getting it, but the galleries did, because they were looking at the orchestra getting slapped. Your health, HE!

He. Yours, Jim! Tell me, why didn't you let me finish my speech—I was just getting a good start.

Jackson [*seriously*]. My friend, because your speech was a sacrilege. Politics—all right. Manners—as much as you want. But Providence—leave it in peace. And believe me, friend, I shut your mouth in time. Didn't I, Papa Briquet?

Briquet [*coming nearer*]. Yes. It was too much like literature. This is not an academy. You forget yourself, HE.

Tilly. But to shut one's mouth—faugh . . .

Briquet [*in a didactic tone*]. Whenever one shuts one's mouth, it is always high time to shut it, unless one is drinking. Hey, whiskey and soda!

Voices. Whiskey and soda for the Manager!

Mancini. But this is obscurantism. Philosophizing again, Briquet?

Briquet. I am not satisfied with you to-day, HE. Why do you tease them? They don't like it. Your health! A good slap must be clean like a crystal—fft-fft! Right side, left side, and done with it. They will like it; they will laugh, and love you. But in your slaps there is a certain bite, you understand, a certain smell ——

He. But they laughed, nevertheless!

Briquet. But without pleasure, without pleasure, HE. You pay, and immediately draw a draft on their bank; it's not the right game—they won't like you.

Jackson. That's what *I* tell him. He had already begun to make them angry.

Bezano [*entering*]. Consuelo, where are you? I have been looking for you—come on. [*Both go out. The* BARON, *after hesitating a while, follows them.* MANCINI *accompanies him respectfully to the door.*]

He [*sighs*]. You don't understand, my dear friends; you are simply old, and have forgotten the smell of the stage.

Jackson. Aha! Who is old, my young man?

He. Don't be angry, Jim. It's a play, don't you understand? I become happy when I enter the ring and hear the music. I wear a mask and I feel humorous. There is a mask on my face, and I play. I may say *anything* like a drunkard. Do you understand? Yesterday when I, with this stupid face, was playing the great man, the philosopher [*he assumes a proud monumental pose, and repeats the gesture of the play—general laughter*], I was walking this way, and was telling how great, how wise, how incomparable I was—how God lived in me, how high I stood above the earth—how glory shone above my head [*his voice changes and he is speaking faster*], then you, Jim, you hit me for the first time. And I asked you "What is it, they're applauding me?" Then, at the tenth slap, I said: "It seems to me that they sent for me from the Academy?" [*Acts, looking around him with an air of unconquerable pride and splendour. Laughter. Jackson gives him a real slap.*]

He [*holding his face*]. Why?

Jackson. Because you're a fool, and play for nothing. Waiter, the check.

[*Laughter. The bell calls them to the ring. The actors go out in haste, some running. The waiters collect their money.*]

Briquet [*in a sing-song*]. To the ring—to the ring——

Mancini. I want to tell you something, He. You are not going yet?

He. No. I'll take a rest.

Briquet. To the ring—to the ring——

[*The clowns as they go sing in shrill, squeaky voices. Little by little they all disappear, and loud music begins.* He *seats himself on the sofa with his legs crossed, and yawns.*]

Mancini. He, you have something none of my ancestors ever had—money. Let's have a nice bottle on you. Waiter, please ——[*The waiter, who was taking up dishes, brings a bottle of wine and glasses and goes out.*]

He. You're blue, Mancini. [*Stretches.*] Well, at my age, a hundred slaps—it seems pretty hard. So you're blue. How are things getting on with your girl?

Mancini. Tss! Bad! Complications—parents—[*shudders*]. Ah——

He. Prison!

Mancini [*laughing*]. Prison! Mustn't I uphold the glory of my name now, eh? He, I'm joking—but there is Hell in my heart. You're the only one who understands me. But tell me how to explain this passion. It will turn my hair grey, it'll bring me to prison, to the grave. I am a tragic man, He——[*Wipes his eyes with a dirty handkerchief.*] Why don't I like things which are not forbidden? Why, at all moments, even at the very moment of ecstasy, must I be reminded of some law?—it is stupid. He, I am becoming an anarchist. Good God—Count Mancini an anarchist. That's the only thing I've missed.

He. Isn't there a way of settling it somehow?

Mancini. Is there a way of getting money, somehow?

He. And the Baron?

Mancini. Oh, yes! He's just waiting for it, the blood-sucker! He'll get what he's after. Some day, you'll see me give him Consuelo for ten thousand francs, perhaps for five!

He. Cheap.

Mancini. Did I say it was anything else? Do I want to do it? But these bourgeois are strangling me, they've got me by the throat. He, one can easily see that you're a gentleman, and of good society, you understand me—I showed you the jewels which I sent back to him—damn honesty—I didn't even dare change the stones, put false ones——

He. Why?

Mancini. It would have queered the game. Do you think he didn't weigh the diamonds when he got them back?

He. He will not marry her.

Mancini. Yes he will. You don't understand. [*Laughs.*] The first half of his life, this man had only appetites—now love's got him. If he does not get Consuelo, he is lost, he is—like a withered narcissus. Plague take him with his automobiles. Did you see his car?

He. I did. . . . Give Consuelo to the Jockey——

Mancini. To Bezano? [*Laughs.*] What nonsense you do talk! Oh, I know. It's

your joke about Adam and Eve. But please stop it. It's clever, but it compromises the child. She told me about it.

He. Or give her to me.

Mancini. Have you a billion? [*Laughs.*] Ah, He, I'm not in the proper mood to listen to your clownish jokes —— They say there are terrible jails in this country, and no discriminations are being made between people of my kind, and plain scoundrels. Why do you look at me like that? You're making fun of me?

He. No.

Mancini. I'll never get accustomed to those faces. You're so disgustingly made up.

He. He will not marry her. You can be as proud as you please, Mancini, but he'll not marry her. What *is* Consuelo? She is not educated. When she is off her horse, any good housemaid from a decent house has nicer manners, and speaks better. [*Nonchalantly.*] Don't *you* think she's stupid?

Mancini. No, she's not stupid. And you, He, are a fool. What need has a woman of intelligence? Why, He, you astonish me. Consuelo is an unpolished jewel, and only a real donkey does not notice her sparkle. Do you know what happened? I tried to begin to polish her ——

He. Yes, you took a teacher. And what happened?

Mancini [*nodding his head*]. I was frightened—it went too fast—I had to dismiss him. Another month or two, and *she* would have kicked *me* out. [*Laughs.*] The clever old diamond merchants of Amsterdam keep their precious stones unpolished, and fool the thieves. My father taught me that.

He. The sleep of a diamond. It is only sleeping, then. You are wise, Mancini.

Mancini. Do you know what blood flows in the veins of an Italian woman? The blood of Hannibal and Corsini—of a Borgia—and of a dirty Lombardi peasant—and of a Moor. Oh! an Italian woman is not of a lower race, with only peasants and gypsies behind her. All possibilities, all forms are included in her, as in our marvelous sculpture. Do you understand that, you fool? Strike here—out springs a washerwoman, or a cheap street girl whom you want to throw out, because she is sloppy and has a screechy voice. Strike there—but carefully and gently, for there stands a queen, a goddess, the Venus of the Capitol, who sings like a Stradivarius and makes you cry, idiot! An Italian woman—

He. You're quite a poet, Mancini! But what will the Baron make of her?

Mancini. What? What? Make of *her?* A baroness, you fool! What are you laughing at? I don't get you? But I am happy that this lovesick beast is neither a duke nor a prince—or she would be a princess and I—what would become of me? A year after the wedding they would not let me even into the kitchen [*laughing*] not even into the kitchen! I, Count Mancini, and she a—a simple ——

He [*jumping up*]. What did you say? You are not her father, Mancini?

Mancini. Tss—the devil—I am so nervous to-day! Heavens, who do you think I am? "Her father?" Of course [*tries to laugh*]; how silly you are—haven't you noticed the family resemblance? Just look, the nose, the eyes——[*Suddenly sighs deeply.*] Ah, He! How unhappy I am! Think of it. Here I am, a gentleman, nearly beaten in my struggle to keep up the honour of my name, of an old house, while there in the parquet—there sits that beast, an elephant with the eyes of a spider . . . and he looks at Consuelo . . . and . . .

He. Yes, yes, he has the motionless stare of a spider—you're right!

Mancini. Just what I say—a spider! But I must, I shall compel him to marry her. You'll see——[*Walking excitedly up and down, playing with his cane.*] You'll see! All my life I've been getting ready for this battle. [*He continues to walk up and down. Silence. Outside, great stillness.*]

He [*listening*]. Why is it so quiet out there? What a strange silence.

Mancini [*disgusted*]. I don't know. Out there it is quiet—but here [*touching his forehead with his cane*], here is storm, whirlwind. [*Bends over the clown.*]. He, shall I tell you a strange thing—an unusual trick of nature? [*Laughs, and looks very important.*] For three centuries the Counts Mancini have had no children! [*Laughs.*]

He. Then how were you born?

Mancini. Sh! Silence! That is the secret of our sainted mothers! Ha-ha! We are too ancient a stock—too exquisitely refined to trouble ourselves with such things

—matters in which a peasant is more competent than ourselves. [*Enter an usher.*] What do you want? The manager is on the stage.

The Usher [*bows*]. Yes, sir. Baron Regnard wished me to give you this letter.

Mancini. The Baron? Is he there?

The Usher. Baron Regnard has left. There is no answer.

Mancini [*opening the envelope, his hand shaking*]. The devil—the devil!

[*The usher is going.*]

He. Just a minute. Why is there no music? This silence . . .

The Usher. It is the act with Madame Zinida and her lions. [*He goes. Mancini is reading the* BARON'S *note for the second time.*]

He. What's the matter, Mancini? You shine like Jackson's sun.

Mancini. What's the matter, did you ask? What's the matter? What's the matter? [*Balancing his cane, he takes steps like a ballet-dancer.*]

He. Mancini! [MANCINI *rolls his eyes, makes faces, dances.*] Speak, you beast!

Mancini [*holds out his hand*]. Give me ten francs! Quick—ten francs—here, come on. [*Puts it automatically into his vest pocket.*] Listen, HE! If in a month I don't have a car of my own, you may give me one of your slaps!

He. What! He's going to marry? He's decided?

Mancini. What do you mean by "decided"? [*Laughs.*] When a man has the rope about his neck, you don't ask him about his health! Baron—— [*Stops suddenly, startled. Briquet is staggering in like a drunken man, his hand over his eyes.*]

He [*goes to him, touches his shoulder gently*]. What is the matter, Papa Briquet? Tell me!

Briquet [*groaning*]. Oh, oh, I can't . . . I can't . . . Ah——

He. Something has happened? You are ill? Please speak.

Briquet. I can't look at it! [*Takes his hands from his eyes, opens them wide.*] Why does she do it? Ah, ah, why does she do it? She must be taken away; she is insane. I couldn't look at it. [*Shivers.*] They will tear her to pieces, HE—her lions—they will tear her——

Mancini. Go on, Briquet. She is always like that. You act like a child. You ought to be ashamed.

Briquet. No—— To-day she is mad! And what is the matter with the crowd? They are all like dead people—they're not even breathing. I couldn't stand it. Listen—what's that? [*All listen. There is the same silence.*]

Mancini [*disturbed*]. I'll go and see.

Briquet [*yelling*]. No! Don't! You can't look—damned profession! Don't go. You will scorch her—every pair of eyes that looks at her—at her lions—no, no. It is impossible—it is a sacrilege. I ran away. . . . HE, they will tear her——

He [*tries to be cheerful*]. Keep cool, Papa Briquet—I had no idea you were such a coward. You ought to be ashamed. Have a drink. Mancini, give him some wine.

Briquet. I don't want any. Heavens, if it were only over—— [*All listen.*] I have seen many things in my life, but this . . . Oh, she is crazy.

[*All still listen. Suddenly the silence breaks, like a huge stone wall crashing. There is a thunder of applause, mixed with shouts, music, wild screams—half bestial, half human. The men give way, relieved. Briquet sinks to a seat.*]

Mancini [*nervous*]. You see—you see—you old fool!

Briquet [*sobs and laughs*]. I am not going to allow it any more!

He. Here she is!

[ZINIDA *walks in, alone. She looks like a drunken bacchante, or like a mad woman. Her hair falls over her shoulders dishevelled, one shoulder is uncovered. She walks unseeing, though her eyes glow. She is like the living statue of a mad Victory. Behind her comes an actor, very pale, then two clowns, and a little later* CONSUELO *and* BEZANO. *All look at* ZINIDA *fearfully, as if they were afraid of a touch of her hand, or her great eyes.*]

Briquet [*shouting*]. You are crazy—you're a mad woman!

Zinida. I? No. Did you see? Did you see? Well? [*She stands smiling, with the expression of a mad Victory.*]

Tilly [*plaintively*]. Cut it out, Zinida. Go to the devil!

Zinida. You saw, too! And! . . . what——

Briquet. Come home—come home. [*To the others.*] You can do what you like here. Zinida, come home.

Polly. You can't go, Papa. There's still your number.

Zinida [*her eyes meet those of* Bezano]. Ah! Bezano. [*Laughs long and happily.*] Bezano! Alfred! Did you see? My lions *do* love me! [Bezano, *without answering, leaves the stage.* Zinida *seems to wither and grow dim, as a light being extinguished. Her smile fades, her eyes and face grow pale, Briquet anxiously bends over her.*]

Briquet [*in a slow voice*]. A chair!

[Zinida *sits. Her head drops on her shoulder, her arms fall, she begins to shiver and tremble. Some one calls, "cognac"—an actor runs to get it.*]

Briquet [*helpless*]. What is the matter, Zinida darling?

Mancini [*running about*]. She must quiet down. Get out, get out—vagabonds! I'll fix everything, Papa Briquet. The wrap—where's the wrap? She's cold. [*A clown hands it to him; they cover her.*]

Tilly [*timidly*]. Wouldn't you like some moosic?

Mancini [*giving her some cognac*]. Drink, Duchess, drink! Drink it all—that's it.

[Zinida *drinks it like water, evidently not noticing the taste. She shivers. The clowns disappear one by one.* Consuelo, *with a sudden flexible movement, falls on her knees before* Zinida *and kisses her hands, warming them between her own.*]

Consuelo. Dear, dear, you are cold! Poor little hands, dear good one, beloved one——

Zinida [*pushes her away, gently*]. Ho—home. It will soon be over. It's nothing . . . I am ver—very . . . home. . . . You stay here, Briquet—you must. I'm all right.

Consuelo. You are cold? Here is my shawl.

Zinida. No—let me. . . . [Consuelo *gets up, and moves aside.*]

Briquet. And it's all because of your books, Zinida—your mythology. Now tell me, why do you want those beasts to love you? Beasts! Do you understand, He? You too, you're from that world. She'll listen more to you. Explain it to her. Whom can those beasts love? Those hairy monsters, with diabolic eyes?

He [*genially*]. I believe—only their equals. You are right, Papa Briquet—they must be the same race.

Briquet. Of course, and this is all nonsense—literature. Explain it to her, He.

He [*takes on a meditative air*]. Yes, you are right, Briquet.

Briquet. You see, dear, silly woman—everybody agrees. . . .

Mancini. Oh! Briquet, you make me sick; you are an absolute despot, an Asiatic.

Zinida [*with the shadow of a smile, gives her hand to be kissed*]. Calm yourself, Louis. It is over—I am going home. [*She stands up, shaking, still chilled.*]

Briquet. But how? alone, dear?

Mancini. What! fool! Did you imagine that Count Mancini would leave a woman when she needed help? *I* shall take her home—let your brutal heart be at rest—I shall take her home. Thomas, run for an automobile. Don't push me Briquet, you are as awkward as a unicorn . . . that's the way, that's the way——

[*They are holding her, guiding her slowly toward the door.* Consuelo, *her chin resting in her hand, is following them with her eyes. Unconsciously she assumes a somewhat affected pose.*]

Mancini. I'll come back for you, child—

[*Only* He *and* Consuelo *are left on the stage. In the ring, music, shrieks, and laughter begin again.*]

He. Consuelo——

Consuelo. Is that you, He, dear?

He. Where did you learn that pose? I have seen it only in marble. You look like Psyche.

Consuelo. I don't know, He. [*She sighs and sits on the sofa, keeping in her pose the same artificiality and beauty.*] It's all so sad here, to-day. He, are you sorry for Zinida?

He. What did she do?

Consuelo. I didn't see. I had closed my

eyes, and didn't open them. Alfred says she is a wicked woman, but that isn't true. She has such nice eyes, and what tiny cold hands—as if she were dead. What does she do it for? Alfred says she should be audacious, beautiful, but quiet, otherwise what she does is only disgusting. It isn't true, is it, He?

He. She loves Alfred.

Consuelo. Alfred? My Bezano? [*Shrugging her shoulders, and surprised.*] How does she love him? The same as everyone loves?

He. Yes—as everyone loves—or still more.

Consuelo. Bezano? Bezano? No—it's nonsense. [*Pause; silence.*] What a beautiful costume you have, He. You invented it yourself?

He. Jim helped me.

Consuelo. Jim is so nice! All clowns are nice.

He. I am wicked.

Consuelo [*laughs*]. You? You are the nicest of all. Oh, goodness! Three acts more! This is the second on now. Alfred and I are in the third. Are you coming to see me?

He. I always do. How beautiful you are, Consuelo.

Consuelo. Like Eve? [*Smiles.*]

He. Yes, Consuelo. And if the Baron asks you to be his wife, will you accept?

Consuelo. Certainly, He. That's all Father and I are waiting for. Father told me yesterday that the Baron will not hesitate very long. Of course I do not love him. But I will be his honest, faithful wife. Father wants to teach me to play the piano.

He. Are those your own words—"his honest, faithful wife"?

Consuelo. Certainly they are mine. Whose could they be? He loves me so much, the poor thing. Dear He, what does "love" mean? Everybody speaks of love —love—Zinida, too! Poor Zinida! What a boring evening this has been. He, did you paint the laughter on your face yourself?

He. My own self, dear little Consuelo—

Consuelo. How do you do it, all of you? I tried once, but couldn't do a thing. Why are there no women clowns? Why are you so silent, He? You, too, are sad, to-night.

He. No, I am happy to-night. Give me your hand, Consuelo, I want to see what it says.

Consuelo. Do you know how? What a talented man you are! Read it, but don't lie, like a gypsy. [He *goes down on one knee and takes her hand. Both bend over it.*] Am I lucky?

He. Yes, lucky. But wait a minute—this line here—funny. Ah, Consuelo, what does it say, here! [*Acting.*] I tremble, my eyes do not dare to read the strange, fatal signs. Consuelo ——

Consuelo. The stars are talking.

He. Yes, the stars are talking. Their voices are distant and terrible; their rays are pale, and their shadows slip by, like the ghosts of dead virgins—their spell is upon thee, Consuelo, beautiful Consuelo. Thou standest at the door of Eternity.

Consuelo. I don't understand. Does it mean that I will live long?

He. This line—how far it goes. Strange! Thou wilt live eternally, Consuelo.

Consuelo. You see, He, you did tell me a lie, just like a gypsy!

He. But it is written—here, silly—and here. Now think of what the stars are saying. Here you have eternal life, love, and glory; and here, listen to what Jupiter says. He says: "Goddess, thou must not belong to any one born on earth," and if you marry the Baron—you'll perish, you'll die, Consuelo. [*Consuelo laughs.*]

Consuelo. Will he eat me?

He. No. But you will die before he has time to eat you.

Consuelo. And what will become of Father? Is there nothing about him here? [*Laughing, she softly sings the melody of the waltz, which is playing in the distance.*]

He. Don't laugh, Consuelo, at the voice of the stars. They are far away, their rays are light and pale, and we can barely see their sleeping shadows, but their sorcery is stern and dark. You stand at the gates of eternity. Your die is cast; you are doomed —and your Alfred, whom you love in your heart, even though your mind is not aware of it, your Alfred cannot save you. He, too, is a stranger on this earth. He is submerged in a deep sleep. He, too, is a little god who has lost himself, and Consuelo, never, never will he find his way to Heaven again. Forget Bezano ——

Consuelo. I don't understand a word. Do the gods really exist? My teacher told me about them. But I thought it was all tales! [*Laughs.*] And my Bezano is a god?

He. Forget Bezano! Consuelo, do you know who can save you? The only one who can save you? —I.

Consuelo [*laughing*]. You, He?

He. Yes, but don't laugh! Look. Here is the letter H. It is I, He.

Consuelo. He Who Gets Slapped? Is that written here, too?

He. That, too. The stars know everything. But look here, what more is written about him. Consuelo, welcome him. He is an old god in disguise, who came down to earth only to love you, foolish little Consuelo.

Consuelo [*laughing and singing*]. Some god!

He. Don't mock! The gods don't like such empty laughter from beautiful lips. The gods grow lonely and die, when they are not recognized. Oh, Consuelo! Oh, great joy and love! Do recognize this god, and accept him. Think a moment, one day a god suddenly went crazy!

Consuelo. Gods go crazy, too?

He. Yes, when they are half man, then they often go mad. Suddenly he saw his own sublimity, and shuddered with horror, with infinite solitude, with superhuman anguish. It is terrible, when anguish touches the divine soul!

Consuelo. I don't like it. What language are you speaking? I don't understand ——

He. I speak the language of thy awakening. Consuelo, recognize and accept thy god, who was thrown down from the summit like a stone. Accept the god who fell to the earth in order to live, to play, and to be infinitely drunk with joy. Evoë, Goddess!

Consuelo [*tortured*]. He—I cannot understand. Let my hand alone.

He [*stands up*]. Sleep. Then wake again, Consuelo! And when thou wakest—remember that hour when, covered with snow-white sea-foam, thou didst emerge from the sky-blue waters. Remember Heaven, and the slow eastern wind, and the whisper of the foam at thy marble feet.

Consuelo [*her eyes are closed*]. I believe —wait—I remember. Remind me further—

[He *is bowed over* Consuelo, *with lifted arms; he speaks slowly, but in a commanding voice, as if conjuring.*]

He. You see the waves playing. Remember the song of the sirens, their sorrowless song of joy. Their white bodies, shining blue through the blue waters. Or can you hear the sun, singing? Like the strings of a divine harp, spread the golden rays —— Do you not see the hand of God, which gives harmony, light, and love to the world? Do not the mountains, in the blue cloud of incense, sing their hymn of glory? Remember, O Consuelo, remember the prayer of the mountains, the prayer of the sea. [*Silence.*]

He [*commandingly*]. Remember—Consuelo!

Consuelo [*opening her eyes*]. No! He, I was feeling so happy, and suddenly I forgot it all. Yet something of it all is still in my heart. Help me again, He, remind me. It hurts, I hear so many voices. They all sing "Consuelo—Consuelo." What comes after? [*Silence; pause.*] What comes after? It hurts. Remind me, He. [*Silence—in the ring, the music suddenly bursts forth in a tempestuous circus gallop. Silence.*] He, [*opens her eyes and smiles*] that's Alfred galloping. Do you recognize his music?

He [*with rage*]. Leave the boy alone! [*Suddenly falls on his knees before* Consuelo.] I love you, Consuelo, revelation of my heart, light of my nights, I love you, Consuelo. [*Looks at her in ecstasy and tears—and gets a slap; starting back.*] What's this?

Consuelo. A slap! You forget who you are. [*Stands up, with anger in her eyes.*] You are He Who Gets Slapped! Did you forget it? Some god! With such a face—slapped face! Was it with slaps they threw you down from heaven, god?

He. Wait! Don't stand up! I—did not finish the play!

Consuelo [*sits*]. Then you were playing?

He. Wait! One minute.

Consuelo. You lied to me. Why did you play so that I believed you?

He. I am He Who Gets Slapped!

Consuelo. You are not angry because I struck you? I did not want to really, but

you were so—disgusting. And now you are so funny again. You have great talent, He—or are you drunk?

He. Strike me again.

Consuelo. No.

He. I need it for my play. Strike!

Consuelo [*laughs, and touches his cheek with her fingertips*]. Here, then!

He. Didn't you understand that you are a queen, and I a fool who is in love with his queen? Don't you know, Consuelo, that every queen has a fool, and he is always in love with her, and they always beat him for it. He Who Gets Slapped.

Consuelo. No. I didn't know.

He. Yes, every queen. Beauty has her fool. Wisdom, too. Oh, how many fools she has! Her court is overcrowded with enamoured fools, and the sound of slaps does not cease, even through the night. But I never received such a sweet slap as the one given by my little queen. [*Someone appears at the door.* He *notices it, and continues to play, making many faces.*] Clown He can have no rival! Who is there who could stand such a deluge of slaps, such a hail-storm of slaps, and not get soaked? [*Feigns to cry aloud.*] "Have pity on me. I am but a poor fool!"

[*Enter two men: an actor, dressed as a bareback rider, and a gentleman from the audience. He is spare, dressed in black, very respectable. He carries his hat in his hand.*]

Consuelo [*laughing, embarrassed*]. He, there is someone here. Stop!

He [*gets up*]. Who is it? Who dares to intrude in the castle of my queen? [He *stops, suddenly.* Consuelo, *laughing, jumps up and runs away, after a quick glance at the gentleman.*]

Consuelo. You cheered me up, He. Good-bye. [*At the door.*] You shall get a note to-morrow.

The Bareback Rider [*laughing*]. A jolly fellow, sir. You wanted to see him? There he is. He, the gentleman wants to see you.

He [*in a depressed voice*]. What can I do for you?

[*The actor bows, and goes away, smiling. Both men take a step toward each other.*]

Gentleman. Is this you?

He. Yes! It is I. And you? [*Silence.*]

Gentleman. Must I believe my eyes? Is this *you,* Mr.——

He [*in a rage*]. My name here is He. I have no other name, do you hear? He, Who Gets Slapped. And if you want to stay here, don't forget it.

Gentleman. You are so familiar. As far as I can remember——

He. We are all familiar, here. [*Contemptuously.*] Besides, that's all you deserve, anywhere.

Gentleman [*humbly*]. You have not forgiven me, He? [*Silence.*]

He. Are you here with my wife? Is she too in the circus?

Gentleman [*quickly*]. Oh, no! I am alone. She stayed there!

He. You've left her already?

Gentleman [*humbly*]. No—we have—a son. After your sudden and mysterious disappearance—when you left that strange and insulting letter——

He [*laughs*]. Insulting? You are still able to feel insults? What are you doing here? Were you looking for me, or is it an accident?

Gentleman. I have been looking for you, for half a year—through many countries. And suddenly, to-day—by accident, indeed—I had no acquaintances here, and I went to the circus. We must talk things over . . . He, I implore you. [*Silence.*]

He. Here is a shadow I cannot lose! To talk things over! Do you really think we still have something to talk over? All right. Leave your address with the porter, and I will let you know when you can see me. Now get out. [*Proudly.*] I am busy.

[*The* Gentleman *bows and leaves.* He *does not return his bow, but stands with outstretched hand, in the pose of a great man, who shows a boring visitor the door.*]

ACT THREE

The same room. Morning, before the rehearsal. He *is striding thoughtfully up and down the room. He wears a broad, parti-coloured coat, and a prismatic tie. His derby is on the back of his head, and his face is clean-shaven like that of an actor. His eyebrows are drawn, lips pressed together energetically, his whole appearance severe and sombre. After the entrance of*

the GENTLEMAN *he changes. His face becomes clown-like, mobile—a living mask.*

The GENTLEMAN *comes in. He is dressed in black, and has an extremely well-bred appearance. His thin face is yellowish, like an invalid's. When he is upset, his colourless, dull eyes often twitch.* HE *does not notice him.*

Gentleman. Good morning, sir.

He [*turning around and looking at him absent-mindedly*]. Ah! It's you.

Gentleman. I am not late? You look as if you did not expect me. I hope I am not disturbing you? You fixed this time yourself, however, and I took the liberty——

He. No manners, please. What do you want? Tell me quickly, I have no time.

Gentleman [*looking around with distaste*]. I expected you would invite me to some other place . . . to your home.

He. I have no other home. This is my home.

Gentleman. But people may disturb us here.

He. So much the worse for you. Talk faster! [*Silence.*]

Gentleman. Will you allow me to sit down?

He. Sit down. Look out! That chair is broken.

[*The* GENTLEMAN, *afraid, pushes away the chair and looks helplessly around. Everything here seems to him dangerous and strange. He chooses an apparently solid little gilded divan, and sits down; puts his silk hat aside, slowly takes off his gloves, which stick to his fingers.* HE *observes him indifferently.*]

Gentleman. In this suit, and with this face, you make a still stranger impression. Yesterday it seemed to me that it was all a dream; to-day . . . *you* . . .

He. You have forgotten my name again? My name is HE.

Gentleman. You are determined to continue talking to me like this?

He. Decidedly! But you are squandering your time like a millionaire. Hurry up!

Gentleman. I really don't know . . . Everything here strikes me so . . . These posters, horses, animals, which I passed when I was looking for you . . . And finally, *you,* a clown in a circus! [*With a slight, deprecating smile.*] Could I expect it? It is true, when everybody there decided that you were dead, I was the only man who did not agree with them. I felt that you were still alive. But to find you among such surroundings—I can't understand it.

He. You said you have a son, now. Doesn't he look like me?

Gentleman. I don't understand.

He. Don't you know that widows or divorced women often have children by the new husband, which resemble the old one? This misfortune did not befall you? [*Laughs.*] And your book, too, is a big success, I hear.

Gentleman. You want to insult me again?

He [*laughing*]. What a restless, touchy faker you are! Please sit still; be quiet. It is the custom here to speak this way. Why were you trying to find me?

Gentleman. My conscience . . .

He. You have no conscience. Or were you afraid that you hadn't robbed me of *everything* I possessed, and you came for the rest? But what more could you take from me now? My fool's cap with its bells? You wouldn't take it. It's too big for your bald head! Crawl back, you bookworm!

Gentleman. You cannot forgive the fact that your wife . . .

He. To the devil with my wife! [*The* GENTLEMAN *is startled and raises his eyebrows.* HE *laughs.*]

Gentleman. I don't know. . . . But such language! I confess I find difficulty in expressing my thoughts in such an atmosphere, but if you are so . . . indifferent to your wife, who, I shall allow myself to emphasize the fact, loved you and thought you were a saint—— [HE *laughs.*] Then *what* brought you to such a . . . step? Or is it that you cannot forgive me my success? A success, it is true, not entirely deserved. And now you want to take vengeance, with your humbleness, on those who misunderstood you. But you always were so indifferent to glory. Or your indifference was only hypocrisy. And when I, a more lucky rival . . .

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He [*with a burst of laughter*]. Rival! You—a rival!

Gentleman [*growing pale*]. But my book!

He. You are talking to me about *your* book? To me? [*The* GENTLEMAN *is very pale.* HE *looks at him with curiosity and mockery.*]

Gentleman [*raising his eyes*]. I am a very unhappy man.

He. Why?

Gentleman. I am a very unhappy man. You must forgive me. I am deeply, irreparably, and infinitely unhappy.

He. But why? Explain it to me. [*Starts walking up and down.*] You say yourself that your book is a tremendous success, you are famous, you have glory; there is not a yellow newspaper in which *you* and *your* thoughts are not mentioned. Who knows *me?* Who cares about my heavy abstractions, from which it was difficult for them to derive a single thought? You—you are the great vulgarizer! You have made my thoughts comprehensible even to horses! With the art of a great vulgarizer, a tailor of ideas, you dressed my Apollo in a barber's jacket, you handed my Venus a yellow ticket, and to my bright hero you gave the ears of an ass. And then your career is made, as Jackson says. And wherever I go, the whole street looks at me with thousands of faces, in which—what mockery—I recognize the traits of my own children. Oh! How ugly your son must be, if he resembles me! Why then are you unhappy, you poor devil? [*The* GENTLEMAN *bows his head, plucking at his gloves.*] The police haven't caught you, as yet. What am I talking about? Is it possible to catch you? You always keep within the limits of the law. You have been torturing yourself up to now because you are not married to my wife. A notary public is always present at your thefts. What is the use of this self-torture, my friend? Get married. I died. You are not satisfied with having taken only my wife? Let my glory remain in your possession. It is yours. Accept my ideas. Assume all the rights, my most lawful heir! I died! And when I was dying [*making a stupidly pious face*] I forgave thee! [*Bursts out laughing. The* GENTLEMAN *raises his head, and bending forward, looks straight into* HE's *eyes.*]

Gentleman. And my pride?

He. Have you any pride? [*The* GENTLEMAN *straightens up, and nods his head, silently.*] Yes! But please stand off a little. I don't like to look at you. Think of it. There was a time when I loved you a little, even thought you a little gifted! You—my empty shadow.

Gentleman [*nodding his head*]. I am your shadow. [HE *keeps on walking, and looks over his shoulder at the* GENTLEMAN, *with a smile.*]

He. Oh, you are marvellous! What a comedy! What a touching comedy! Listen. Tell me frankly if you can; do you hate me very much?

Gentleman. Yes! With all the hate there is in the world! Sit down here.

He. You order me?

Gentleman. Sit down here. Thank you. [*Bows.*] I am respected and I am famous, yes? I have a wife and a son, yes? [*Laughs slowly.*] My wife still loves you: our favourite discussion is about your genius. She supposes you are a genius. We, I and she, love you even when we are in bed. Tss! It is I who must make faces. My son—yes, he'll resemble you. And when, in order to have a little rest, I go to my desk, to my ink-pot, my books—there, too, I find you. Always you! Everywhere you! And I am never alone—never myself and alone. And when at night—you, sir, should understand this—when at night I go to my lonely thoughts, to my sleepless contemplations, even then I find your image in my head, in my unfortunate brain, your damned and hateful image! [*Silence. The* GENTLEMAN'S *eyes twitch.*]

He [*speaking slowly*]. What a comedy. How marvellously everything is turned about in this world: the robbed proves to be robber, and the robber is complaining of theft, and cursing! [*Laughs.*] Listen, I was mistaken. You are not my shadow. You are the crowd. If you live by my creations, you hate me; if you breathe my breath, you are choking with anger. And choking with anger, hating me, you still walk slowly on the trail of my ideas. But you are advancing backward, advancing backward, comrade. Oh, what a marvellous comedy! [*Walking and smiling.*] Tell me, would you be relieved if I really had died?

Gentleman. Yes! I think so. Death augments distance and dulls the memory. Death reconciles. But you do not look like a man who——

He. Yes, yes! Death, *certainly!*

Gentleman. Sit down here.

He. Your obedient servant. Yes?

Gentleman. Certainly, I do not dare to ask you—[*makes a grimace*] to ask you to die, but tell me: you'll never come back there? No, don't laugh. If you want me to, I'll kiss your hand. Don't grimace! I would have done so if you had died.

He [*slowly*]. Get out, vermin!

[*Enter* TILLY *and* POLLY *as in the first act, playing. For a long time they do not see the two men.*]

He. Jack!

Tilly. Ah! Good morning, HE. We are rehearsing. You know it is very hard. Jack has just about as much music in his head as my pig.

He [*introducing, nonchalantly*]. My friend . . . For the benefit performance?

[*The clowns bow to the* GENTLEMAN, *making idiotic faces.*]

Polly. Yes. What are you preparing? You are cunning, HE! Consuelo told me what you are preparing for the benefit performance. She leaves us soon, you know?

He. Is that so?

Tilly. Zinida told us. Do you think she would get a benefit performance otherwise? She is a nice girl.

Polly [*taking his small flute-pipe*]. Here! Don't walk as if you were an elephant. Don't forget you are an ant! Come on!

[*They go off, playing.*]

Gentleman [*smiling*]. These are your new comrades? How strange they are!

He. Everything here is strange.

Gentleman. This suit of yours. Black used to be very becoming to you. This one hurts the eyes.

He [*looking himself over*]. Why? It looks very nice. The rehearsal has begun. You must go away. You are disturbing us.

Gentleman. You did not answer my question.

[*Slow strains of the Tango from a small orchestra in the ring.*]

He [*listening absent-mindedly to the music*]. What question?

Gentleman [*who does not hear the music*]. I pray you tell me: will you ever come back?

He [*listening to the music*]. Never, never, never!

Gentleman [*getting up*]. Thank you. I am going.

He. Never, never, never! Yes, run along. And don't come back. There, you were still bearable and useful for something, but here you are superfluous.

Gentleman. But if something should happen to you . . . you are a healthy man, but in this environment, these people . . . how will I know? They don't know your name here?

He. My name here is unknown, but *you will know.* Anything else?

Gentleman. I can be at peace? On your word of honour? Of course I mean, comparatively, at peace?

He. Yes, you may be comparatively at peace. Never! [*They walk to the door, the* GENTLEMAN *stops.*]

Gentleman. May I come to the circus? You will allow me?

He. Certainly. You are the audience! [*Laughs.*] But I shan't give you my card for a pass. But why do you want to come? Or do you like the circus so much, and since when?

Gentleman. I want to look at you some more, and to understand, perhaps. Such a transformation! Knowing you as I do, I cannot admit that you are here without any *idea.* But what idea? [*Looks short-sightedly at* HE. HE *grimaces and thumbs his nose.*]

Gentleman. What is that?

He. My idea! Good-bye, Prince! My regards to your respected wife, your Highness' wonderful son!

[*Enter* MANCINI.]

Mancini. You positively live in the circus, HE. Whenever I come, you are here. You are a fanatic in your work, sir.

He [*introducing*]. Prince Poniatovsky, Count Mancini.

Mancini [*drawing himself up*]. Very, very glad. And you too, Prince, you know my queer fellow? What a nice face he has, hasn't he? [*He touches* HE's *shoulder patronizingly, with the tip of his cane.*]

Gentleman [*awkwardly*]. Yes, I have the pleasure . . . certainly. Good-bye, Count.

Mancini. Good-day, Prince.

He [*accompanying him*]. Look out, your Highness, for the dark passages! the steps are so rotten. Unfortunately I cannot usher you out to the street.

Gentleman [*in a low voice*]. You will not give me your hand when we say good-bye? We are parting for ever.

He. Unnecessary, Prince. I shall still hope to meet you in the Kingdom of Heaven. I trust you will be there, too?

Gentleman [*with disgust*]. How you did succeed! You have so much of the clown in you!

He. I am He Who is Getting Slapped. Good-bye, Prince. [*They take another step.*]

Gentleman [*looking* He *in the eyes; in a very low voice*]. Tell me, you are not mad?

He [*just as low, his eyes wide open*]. I am afraid, I am afraid you are right, Prince. [*Still low.*] Ass! Never in your life did you use such a precise expression. I am mad! [*Playing the clown again,* He *shows him to the stair, with a big, affected gesture, a sweep of the hand and arm from his head to the floor, the fingers moving, to represent the steps.*]

He [*laughing*]. He is down! *Au revoir,* Prince. [*The* Gentleman *goes out.* He *comes skipping back, and takes a pose.*] Mancini! Let us dance the Tango! Mancini, I adore you!

Mancini [*sitting back comfortably and playing with his cane*]. Don't forget yourself, He. But you're hiding something, my boy. I always said you used to belong to society. It is so easy to talk to you. And who is this Prince? A genuine one?

He. Genuine. A first rater. Like you!

Mancini. A sympathetic face. Although at first I thought he was an undertaker who came for an order. Ah, He! When shall I finally depart from these dirty walls, from Papa Briquet, stupid posters, and brutal jockeys!

He. Very soon, Mancini.

Mancini. Yes, soon. I am simply exhausted in these surroundings, He! I begin to feel myself a horse. You are from society, still you don't yet know what high society means. To be at last decently dressed, to attend receptions, to display the splendour of wit; from time to time to have a game of baccarat [*laughing*] without tricks or cheating ——

He. And when evening comes, go to a suburb, where you are considered an honest father, who loves his children and ——

Mancini. And get hold of something, eh? [*Laughs.*] I shall wear a silk mask and two butlers shall follow me, thus protecting me from the dirty crowd. Ah, He! The blood of my ancestors boils in me. Look at this stiletto. What do you think? Do you think that it was ever stained with blood?

He. You frighten me, Count!

Mancini [*laughing, and putting the stiletto back into its sheath*]. Fool!

He. And what about the girl?

Mancini. Tss! I give those bourgeois absolute satisfaction, and they glorify my name. [*Laughs.*] The splendour of my name is beginning to shine with a force unknown. By the way, do you know what automobile firms are the best? Money is no object. [*Laughs.*] Ah! Papa Briquet.

[*Enter* Briquet *in his overcoat and silk hat. They shake hands.*]

Briquet. So, Mancini, you have obtained a benefit performance for your daughter, Consuelo! I only want to tell you, that if it were not for Zinida . . .

Mancini. Listen, Briquet. Decidedly you are a donkey. What are you complaining of? The Baron has bought all the parquet seats for Consuelo's benefit performance. Isn't that enough for you, you miser?

Briquet. I love your daughter, Mancini, and I am sorry to let her go. What more does she need here? She has an honest job, wonderful comrades, and the atmosphere ——?

Mancini. Not *she,* but *I* need something. You understand? [*Laughs.*] I asked you to increase her salary, Harpagon! and now, Mr. Manager, wouldn't you like to change me a thousand-franc note?

Briquet [*with a sigh*]. Give it to me.

Mancini [*nonchalantly*]. To-morrow. I left it at home. [*All three laugh.*] Laugh, laugh! To-day we are going with the Baron to his villa in the country; people say a very nice villa.

He. What for?

Mancini. You know, He, the crazes of these billionaires. He wants to show Con-

suelo some winter roses, and me his wine cellars. He will come for us here. What is the matter, my little Consuelo?

[*Enter* Consuelo, *almost crying.*]

Consuelo. I can't, father! Tell him! What right has he to yell at me? He almost hit me with his whip!

Mancini [*straightening up*]. Briquet! I beg of you, as the Manager, what is this—a stable? To hit my daughter with a whip! I'll show this cub . . . a mere jockey. . . . No, the devil knows what it is, devil knows, I swear. . . .

Consuelo. Father . . .

Briquet. I will tell him.

Consuelo. Please don't. Alfred didn't hit me. It's a silly thing, what I told you. What an idea! He is so sorry himself. . . .

Briquet. I shall tell him anyhow that——

Consuelo. Don't you dare. You mustn't tell him anything. He didn't do a thing.

Mancini [*still excited*]. He must beg her pardon, the brat.

Consuelo. He's already asked me to forgive him. How silly you all are! I simply cannot work to-day and I got nervous. What nonsense! The silly boy asked me to forgive him, but I didn't want to. He, dear, good morning! I didn't notice you. How becoming your tie is! Where are you going, Briquet? To Alfred?

Briquet. No, I am going home, dear child. Zinida asked me to give you her love. She will not be here to-day, either. [*He goes out.*]

Consuelo. Zinida is so nice, so good. Father, why is it that everybody seems so nice to me? Probably because I am going away soon. He, did you hear the march that Tilly and Polly will play? [*Laughs.*] Such a cheerful one.

He. Yes. I heard it. Your benefit performance will be remarkable.

Consuelo. I think so, too. Father I am hungry. Have them bring me a sandwich.

He. I'll run for it, my Queen.

Consuelo. Please do, He. [*Loudly.*] But not cheese. I don't like it.

[Mancini *and* Consuelo *are alone.* Mancini, *lying back comfortably in an armchair, scrutinizes his daughter with a searching eye.*]

Mancini. I find something particular in you to-day, my child. I don't know whether it is something better or worse. You cried?

Consuelo. Yes, a little. Oh, I am so hungry.

Mancini. But you had your breakfast?

Consuelo. No I didn't. That's why I am so hungry. You again forgot to leave me some money this morning, and without money . . .

Mancini. Oh, the devil . . . what a memory I have. [*Laughs.*] But we shall have a very nice meal to-day. Don't eat very many sandwiches. . . . Yes, positively I like you. You must cry more often, my child; it washes off your superfluous simplicity. You become more of a woman.

Consuelo. Am I so simple, Father?

Mancini. Very. . . . Too much. I like it in others, but not in you. Besides, the Baron . . .

Consuelo. Nonsense. I am not simple. But you know, Bezano scolded me so much, that even you would have cried. The devil knows . . .

Mancini. Tss. . . . Never say "the devil knows." It isn't decent.

Consuelo. I say it only when I am with you.

Mancini. You must not say it when you are with me, either. I know it without you. [*Laughs.*]

Consuelo. Ha! Listen, Father! It's a new number of Alfred's. He makes such a jump! Jim says he's bound to break his neck. Poor fish. . . .

Mancini [*indifferently*]. Or his leg, or his back; they all have to break something. [*Laughs*]. They are breakable toys.

Consuelo [*listening to the music*]. I'll be lonesome without them, Father! The Baron promised to make a ring for me to gallop over as much as I want. He's not lying?

Mancini. A ring? [*Laughs.*] No, it's not a lie. By the way, child, when speaking of Barons, you must say, "he does not tell the truth," and not, "he lies."

Consuelo. It's just the same. It's nice to be wealthy, Father; you can do what you want, then.

Mancini [*with enthusiasm*]. Everything you want. Everything, my child. Ah! Our fate is being decided to-day. Pray

our clement God, Consuelo. The Baron is hanging on a thread.

Consuelo [*indifferently*]. Yes?

Mancini [*making the gesture with his fingers*]. On a very thin, silk thread. I am almost sure that he will make his proposal to-day. [*Laughs.*] Winter roses, and the web of a spider amongst the roses, in order that my dear little fly . . . He is such a spider.

Consuelo [*indifferently*]. Yes, a terrible spider. Father, oughtn't I to let him kiss my hand yet?

Mancini. By no means. You don't know yet, darling, what these men are.

Consuelo. Alfred never kisses.

Mancini. Alfred! Your Alfred is a cub, and he mustn't dare. But with men of that sort, you must be extremely careful, my child. To-day he would kiss your little finger, to-morrow your hand, and after to-morrow you would be on his lap.

Consuelo. Foui! Father, what are you talking about? You should be ashamed!

Mancini. But I know. . . .

Consuelo. Don't you dare! I don't want to hear such dirty things. I shall give the Baron such a slap! A better one than He —let him only try.

Mancini [*with a deprecating gesture*]. All men are like that, child.

Consuelo. It isn't true. Alfred is not. Ah! But where is He? He said he'd run, and he hasn't come back.

Mancini. The buffet here is closed, and he has to get the sandwiches somewhere else. Consuelo, as your father, I want to warn you about He. Don't trust him. He knows something. [*Twirls his finger close to his forehead.*] His game is not fair.

Consuelo. You say it about everybody. I know He; he is such a nice man, and he loves me so much.

Mancini. Believe me, there is something in it.

Consuelo. Father, you make me sick with your advice. Ah! He, thank you.

[He, *breathing somewhat heavily, enters and gives her the sandwiches.*]

He. Eat, Consuelo.

Consuelo. A hot one. . . . But you were running, He? I am so grateful. [*Eats.*] He, do you love me?

He. I do, my Queen. I am your court fool.

Consuelo [*eating*]. And when I leave, will you find another queen?

He [*making a ceremonious bow*]. I shall follow after you, my incomparable one. I shall carry the train of your dress and wipe away my tears with it. [*Pretends to cry.*]

Mancini. Idiot! [*Laughs.*] How sorry I am, He, that those wonderful times have passed, when, in the court of the Counts Mancini, there were scores of motley fools who were given gold and kicks. . . . Now, Mancini is compelled to go to this dirty circus in order to see a good fool; and still, whose fool is he? Mine? No. He belongs to everybody who pays a franc. We shall very soon be unable to breathe because of Democracy. Democracy, too, needs fools! Think of it, He; what an unexampled impertinence.

He. We are the servants of those who pay. But how can we help it, Count?

Mancini. But is that not sad? Imagine: we are in my castle. I, near the fireplace with my glass of wine, you, at my feet chattering your nonsense, jingling your little bells—diverting me. Sometimes you pinch me too with your jokes: it is allowed by the traditions and necessary for the circulation of the blood. After a while—I am sick of you, I want another one. . . . Then I give you a kick and . . . Ah, He, how wonderful it would be!

He. It would be marvellous, Mancini!

Mancini. Yes. Certainly! You would be getting gold coins, those wonderfully little yellow things. . . . Well, when I become rich, I shall take you. That's settled.

Consuelo. Take him, Father . . .

He. And when the Count, tired of my chattering, will give me a kick with his Highness's foot, then I shall lie down at the little feet of my queen, and shall . . .

Consuelo [*laughing*]. Wait for another kick? I'm finished. Father, give me your handkerchief, I want to wipe my hands. You have another one in your pocket. Oh, my goodness, I must work some more!

Mancini [*uneasy*]. But don't forget, my child!

Consuelo. No, to-day I won't forget! Go on!

Mancini [*looking at his watch*]. Yes, it

is time. . . . He asked me to come over when you were ready. You must change your dress before I come back. [*Laughing.*] *Signori, miei complimenti.*

[*He goes out, playing with his cane.* CONSUELO *sits on the corner of the divan, and covers herself with her shawl.*]

Consuelo. Hello, HE. Come and lie down at my feet, and tell me something cheerful. . . . You know, when you paint the laughter on your face, you are very good looking, but now, too, you are very, very nice. Come on, HE, why don't you lie down?

He. Consuelo! Are you going to marry the Baron?

Consuelo [*indifferently*]. It seems so. The Baron is hanging by a thread! HE, there is one little sandwich left. Eat it.

He. Thank you, my queen. [*Eats.*] And do you remember my prediction?

Consuelo. What prediction? How quickly you swallow! Does it taste good?

He. Very good. That if you marry the Baron, you . . .

Consuelo. Oh, that's what you're talking about. . . . But you were making fun.

He. Nobody can tell, my queen. Sometimes one makes fun, and suddenly it turns out to be true; the stars never talk in vain. If sometimes it is difficult for a human being to open his mouth and to say a word, how difficult it must be for a star. Think of it.

Consuelo [*laughing*]. I should say. Such a mouth! [*Makes a tiny mouth.*]

He. No, my dear little girl, were I in your place, I would think it over. And suppose suddenly you should die? Don't marry the Baron, Consuelo!

Consuelo [*thinking.*] And what is—death?

He. I do not know, my Queen. Nobody knows. Like love! Nobody knows. But your little hands will become cold, and your dear little eyes will be closed. You will be away from here. And the music will play without you, and without you the crazy Bezano will be galloping, and Tilly and Polly will be playing on their pipes without you: tilly-polly, tilly-polly . . . tilly-tilly, polly-polly . . .

Consuelo. Please don't, HE darling—I am so sad, anyway . . . tilly-tilly, polly-polly . . . [*Silence.*. HE *looks at* CONSUELO.]

He. You were crying, my little Consuelo?

Consuelo. Yes, a little. Alfred made me nervous. But tell me, is it my fault that I can't do anything to-day? I tried to, but I couldn't.

He. Why?

Consuelo. Ah, I don't know. There is something here. [*Presses her hand against her heart.*] I don't know. HE, I must be sick. What is sickness? Does it hurt very much?

He. It is not sickness. It is the charm of the far off stars, Consuelo. It is the voice of your fate, my little Queen.

Consuelo. Don't talk nonsense, please. What should the stars care about me? I am so small. Nonsense, HE! Tell me rather another tale which you know: about the blue sea and those gods, you know . . . who are so beautiful. Did they all die?

He. They are all alive, but they hide themselves, my goddess.

Consuelo. In the woods or mountains? Can one come across them? Ah, imagine, HE . . . I come across a god, and he suddenly takes a look at me! I'd run away. [*Laughs.*] This morning when I went without breakfast, I became so sad, so disgusted, and I thought: if a god should come, and give me something to eat! And as I thought it, I suddenly heard, honestly it's true, I heard: "Consuelo, somebody's calling you." [*Angrily.*] Don't you dare laugh!

He. Am I laughing?

Consuelo. Honestly, it's true. Ah, HE, but he didn't come. He only called me and disappeared, and how can you find him? It hurt me so much, and hurts even now. Why did you remind me of my childhood? I'd forgotten it entirely. There was the sea . . . and something . . . many, many . . . [*Closes her eyes, smiling.*]

He. Remember, Consuelo!

Consuelo. No [*opening her eyes*]. I forget everything about it. [*Looks around the room.*] HE, do you see what a poster they made for my benefit performance? It's Father's idea. The Baron liked it. [HE *laughs. Silence.*]

He [*slowly*]. Consuelo, my Queen! Don't go to the Baron to-day.

Consuelo. Why? [*After a silence.*] How fresh you are, HE.

He [*lowering his head, slowly*]. I don't want it.

Consuelo [*getting up*]. What? You don't want it?

He [*bowing his head still lower*]. I do not want you to marry the Baron. [*Imploring.*] I . . . I shall not allow it . . . I beg you!

Consuelo. Whom, then, would you ask me to marry? You, perhaps, you fool? [*with a rancorous laugh*] Are you crazy, my darling? "I shall not allow." He! He will not allow me! But it is unbearable! What business is it of yours? [*Walking up and down the room, looks over her shoulder at* He, *with anger.*] Some fool clown, whom they can kick out of here any minute. You make me sick with your stupid tales. Or you like slaps so much. Fool, you couldn't invent anything better than a slap!

He [*without lifting his head*]. Forgive me, my queen.

Consuelo. He is glad when they laugh at him. Some god! No, I shan't forgive. I know you. [*Makes same gesture as Mancini.*] You have something there! Laughs . . . so nicely . . . plays, plays, and then suddenly—hop! *Obey him!* No, darling, I am not that kind! Carry my train, that is your business—fool!

He. I shall carry your train, my queen. Forgive me. Give me back the image of my beautiful, piteous goddess.

Consuelo [*quieting down*]. You're playing again?

He. I am.

Consuelo [*laughing*]. You see! [*Sits down.*] Foolish He.

He. I see everything, my Queen. I see how beautiful you are, and how low under your feet your poor court fool is lying. Somewhere in the abyss his little bells are ringing. He kneels before you and prays; forgive and pity him, my divine one. He was too impudent; he played so cheerfully that he went too far and lost his tiny little mind, the last bit of understanding he had saved up. Forgive me!

Consuelo. All right. I forgive you. [*Laughs.*] And now will you allow me to marry the Baron?

He [*also laughing*]. And nevertheless I will not allow it. But what does a queen care about the permission of her enamoured fool?

Consuelo. Get up. You are forgiven. And do you know why? You think because of your words? You are a cunning beast, He! No, because of the sandwiches. That's why. You were so lovely, you panted so when you brought them. Poor darling He. From to-morrow you may be at my feet again. And as soon as I whistle, "tuwhoo"——

He. I shall instantly lie down at thy feet, Consuelo. It is settled! But all my little bells fell off to-day and——

[Bezano *appears, confused.*]

Consuelo. Alfred! You came for me?

Bezano. Yes. Will you work some more, Consuelo?

Consuelo. Certainly. As much as you want. But I thought, Alfred, you were mad at me? I shan't dawdle any more.

Bezano. No. You didn't dawdle. Don't be offended because I yelled so much. You know when one has to teach, and——

Consuelo. My goodness, do you think I don't understand? You are too nice, unbearably nice, to like teaching such a fool as me. Do you think I don't understand? Come on!

Bezano. Come on! Hello, He! I haven't seen you yet to-day. How are you?

He. How are you, Bezano? Wait, wait a minute—stay here a minute, both of you —that way. Yes!

[Consuelo *and* Bezano *stand side by side, the jockey scowling,* Consuelo *laughing and flushing.*]

Consuelo. Like Adam and Eve? How foolish you are! Terribly. [*She runs away.*] I shall only change my slippers, Alfred.

He. Consuelo! And how about Father and the Baron? They will come soon, to take you with them.

Consuelo. Let them come. They can wait. Not very important people. [*Runs away.* Bezano *hesitatingly follows her.*]

He. Stay here for a while, Bezano. Sit down.

Bezano. What more do you want? I have no time for your nonsense.

He. You can remain standing if you want to. Bezano—you love her? [*Silence.*]

Bezano. I shall allow nobody to interfere with my affairs. You allow yourself too many liberties, He. I don't know you. You came from the street, and why should I trust you?

He. But you know the Baron? Listen. It is painful for me to pronounce these words: she loves you. Save her from the spider! Or are you blind, and don't see the web, which is woven in every dark corner. Get out of the vicious circle in which you are turning around, like a blind man. Take her away, steal her, do what you want . . . kill her even, and take her to the heavens or to the devil! But don't give her to this man! He is a defiler of love. And if you are timid, if you are afraid to lift your hand against her—kill the Baron! Kill!

Bezano [*with a smile*]. And who will kill the others, to come?

He. She loves you.

Bezano. Did she tell you that herself?

He. What a petty, what a stupid, what a human pride! But *you* are a little god! A god, youth! Why don't you want to believe me? Or does the street, from which I have come, bother you? But look, look yourself. Look in my eyes, do such eyes lie? Yes, my face is ugly, I make faces and grimaces, I am surrounded by laughter, but don't you see the god behind all this, a god, like you? Look, look at me! [Bezano *bursts out laughing.*] What are you laughing at, youth?

Bezano. You look now as you did that evening in the ring. You remember? When you were a great man, and they sent for you from the Academy, and suddenly—Hup! He Who Gets Slapped!

He [*laughing the same way*]. Yes, yes, you are right, Bezano. There is a resemblance. [*With a strained expression, taking a pose.*] "It seems to me they sent for me from the Academy!"

Bezano [*displeased*]. But I don't like this play. You can present *your* face for slaps if you want to, but don't dare to expose mine. [*Turns to go.*]

He. Bezano!

Bezano [*turning around*]. And never let me hear any more about Consuelo, and don't dare to tell me again that I am a god! It is disgusting.

[Bezano *goes out angrily, striking his boot with his whip.* He *is alone. Wrathfully, with a tortured expression, he makes a step towards the jockey, then stops, with soundless laughter, his head thrown backwards. The* Baron *and* Mancini *find him in this position, when they enter.*]

Mancini [*laughing*]. What a cheerful chap you are, He! You laugh when you are alone. [He *laughs aloud.*]. Stop it, fool! How can you stand it?

He [*bowing low, with a large gesture*]. How do you do, Baron? My humblest respects to you, Count. I beg your pardon, Count, but you found the clown at work. These are, so to speak, Baron, his everyday pleasures.

Mancini [*lifting his eyebrows*]. Tsss. But you are a clever man, He. I shall ask Papa Briquet to give you a benefit performance. Shall I, He?

He. Please do me the favour, Count.

Mancini. Don't overdo. Be more simple, He. [*Laughs.*] But how many slaps will you get at your benefit performance, when even on weekdays they ring you like a gong! A funny profession, isn't it, Baron?

Baron. Very strange. But where is the Countess?

Mancini. Yes, yes. I shall go for her at once. Dear child, she is so absorbed in her benefit performance and her work. They call this jumping *work,* Baron.

Baron. I can wait a little. [*Sits down, with his silk hat on his head.*]

Mancini. But why? I shall hurry her up. I shall be back at once. And you, He, be a nice host, and entertain our dear guest. You will not be bored in his company, Baron.

[*He goes out.* He *strides about the stage, smiling and glancing from time to time at the* Baron. *The latter sits with his legs spread apart and his chin on the top of his cane. The silk hat remains on his head. He is silent.*]

He. In what way would you like me to entertain you, Baron?

Baron. In no way! I don't like clowns.

He. Nor I Barons.

[*Silence.* He *puts on his derby hat, takes a chair with a large gesture, and puts it down heavily, in front of the* Baron. *He sits astride it, imitating the pose of the* Baron, *and looks him in the eyes. Silence.*]

He. Can you be silent very long?

Baron. Very long.

He [*taps on the floor with his foot*]. And can you wait very long?

Baron. Very long.

He. Until you get it?

Baron. Until I get it. And you?

He. I too.

[*Both look at each other, silently, their heads close together. From the ring one hears the strains of the Tango.*]

ACT FOUR

Music in the ring. More disorder in the room than usual. All kinds of actors' costumes hanging on pegs and lying in the corners. On the table a bouquet of fiery-red roses, put there by some careless hand. At the entrance, near the arch, three bare-back riders are smoking and chattering; they are all minor actors. All part their hair the same way; two wear small moustaches; the third one is clean-shaven with a face like a bull-dog.

The Clean-Shaven One. Go on, Henry! Ten thousand francs! It's too much even for the Baron.

The Second. How much are roses now?

The Shaven. I don't know. In winter they are certainly more expensive, but still Henry talks nonsense. Ten thousand!

The Second. The Baron has his own hot-house. They don't cost him anything.

Henry [*throwing away his cigar, which has burned the tips of his fingers*]. No, Grab, you're silly. There's a whole car-load full! One can smell the roses a mile away. They're to cover the entire arena.

The Shaven. Only the ring.

Henry. It's all the same. In order to cover the ring, you must have thousands and thousands of roses. You'll see what it looks like, when they've covered everything like a carpet. He ordered them to make it like a carpet! Do you see, Grab?

The Second. What a Baron's craze! Isn't it time yet?

Henry. No, we have time enough. I rather like it: a fiery-red tango on a fiery-red cover of winter roses!

The Shaven. Consuelo will be galloping on roses. And Bezano?

The Second. And Bezano on thorns. [*Smiles.*]

The Shaven. That youngster has no self-respect. I'd have refused.

Henry. But it is his job. He's got to do it. [*Laughs.*] Talk to him about self-respect! He's as angry and proud as a little Satan.

The Second. No, you may say what you like, it's an excellent benefit performance. It's a joy to look at the crowd. They're so excited.

Henry. Tss! [*All throw away their cigars and cigarettes, like school boys who are caught, and make way for* Zinida, *who enters with* He.]

Zinida. What are you doing here, gentlemen? Your place is at the entrance.

Henry [*with a respectful smile*]. We are here just for a minute, Madame Zinida. We are going. What a successful evening! And what a glory for Papa Briquet!

Zinida. Yes. Go, and please don't leave your places. [*They go.* Zinida *pulls a drawer out of the desk, and puts in some papers. She is in her lion tamer's costume.*] He, what were you doing near my lions? You frightened me.

He. Why, Duchess, I merely wanted to hear what the beasts were saying about the benefit performance. They are pacing in their cages, and growling.

Zinida. The music makes them nervous. Sit down, He. An excellent evening, and I am so glad that Consuelo is leaving us. Have you heard about the Baron's roses?

He. Everybody is talking about them. The Hymeneal roses!

Zinida. Here are some, too. [*Pushes away the bouquet.*] You find them everywhere. Yes, I am glad. She is superfluous here, and disturbs our work. It is a misfortune for a cast to have in it such a beautiful and such an . . . accessible girl.

He. But it is an honest marriage, Duchess, is it not?

Zinida. I don't care what it is.

He. Spiders, too, need an improvement in their breed! Can't you imagine, Zinida, what charming little spiders this couple will create! They will have the face of their mother, Consuelo, and the stomach of their father, the Baron, and thus could be an ornament for any circus-ring.

Zinida. You are malicious to-day, He. You are morose.

He. I laugh.

Zinida. You do, but without joy. Why are you without make-up?

He. I am in the third act. I have time. And how does Bezano feel about this evening. Is he glad?

Zinida. I didn't talk to Bezano. You know what I think, my friend? You, too, are superfluous here. [*Silence.*]

He. How do you want me to take that, Zinida?

Zinida. Just as I said. In fact, Consuelo sold herself for nothing. What is the Baron worth, with his poor millions? People say that you are clever, too clever perhaps; tell me then, for how much could one buy me?

He [*looking as if he were pricing her*]. Only for a crown.

Zinida. A baron's crown?

He. No, a royal one.

Zinida. You are far from being stupid. And you guessed that Consuelo is not Mancini's daughter?

He [*startled*]. What! And she knows it?

Zinida. Hardly. And why should she know it? Yes, she is a girl from Corsica whose parents are unknown. He preferred to use her for business rather than . . . But according to the law, she is his daughter, Countess Veronica Mancini.

He. It is nice, to have everything done according to law, isn't it, Zinida? But it is curious there is more blue blood in her than in this Mancini. One would say that it was she who found him on the street, and made him a count and her father. Count Mancini! [*Laughs.*]

Zinida. Yes, you are gloomy, He. I changed my mind, you'd better stay.

He. Will I not be superfluous?

Zinida. When she is gone, you will not. Oh! You don't know yet, how nice it is to be with us. What a rest for the body and mind. I understand you. I am clever, too. Like you, I brought with me from out there my inclination for chains, and for a long time I chained myself to whatever I could, in order to feel firm.

He. Bezano?

Zinida. Bezano and others; there were many, there will be many more. My red lion, with whom I am desperately in love, is still more terrible than Bezano. But it is all nonsense; old habits, which we are sorry to let go, like old servants who steal things. Leave Consuelo alone. She has her own way.

He. Automobiles and diamonds?

Zinida. When did you see a beauty clad in simple cotton? If this one does not buy her, another will. They buy off everything that is beautiful. Yes, I know. For the first ten years she will be a sad beauty, who will attract the eyes of the poor man on the side-walk: afterwards she will begin to paint a little around her eyes and smile, and then will take——

He. Her *chauffeur* or butler as a lover? You're not guessing badly, Zinida!

Zinida. Am I not right? I don't want to intrude on your confidence, but to-day I am sorry for you, He. What can you do against Fate? Don't be offended, my friend, by the words of a woman. I like you; you are not beautiful, nor young, nor rich, and your place is——

He. On the side-walk, from which one looks at the beauties. [*Laughs.*] And if I don't want to?

Zinida. What does it matter, your "want" or "don't want"? I am sorry for you, my poor friend, but if you are a strong man, and I think you are, then there is only one way for you. To forget.

He. You think that that's being strong? And you are saying this, you, Queen Zinida, who want to awaken the feeling of love, even in the heart of a lion? For one second of an illusory possession, you are ready to pay with your life, and still you advise me to forget! Give me your strong hand, my beautiful lady; see how much strength there is in this pressure, and don't pity me.

[*Enter* Briquet *and* Mancini. *The latter is reserved, and self-consciously imposing. He has a new suit, but the same cane, and the same noiseless smile of a satyr.*]

Zinida [*whispering*]. Will you stay?

He. Yes. I shan't go away.

Mancini. How are you, my dear? But you are dazzling, my dear! I swear you are marvellous! Your lion would be an ass, if he did not kiss your hand, as I do. . . . [*Kisses her hand.*]

Zinida. May I congratulate you, Count?

Mancini. Yes, *merci.* [*To* He.] How are you, my dear?

He. Good evening, Count!

Briquet. Zinida, the Count wants to pay immediately for the breach of contract with Consuelo . . . the Countess's . . . contract. Don't you remember, Mother, how much it is?

Zinida. I'll look it up, Papa.

Mancini. Yes, please. Consuelo will not return here any more. We leave to-morrow.

[ZINIDA *and* BRIQUET *search among the papers.* HE *takes* MANCINI *roughly by the elbow, and draws him aside.*]

He [*in a low voice*]. How are your girls, Mancini?

Mancini. What girls? What is this, stupidity or blackmail? Look out, sir, be careful, the policeman is not far.

He. You are much too severe, Mancini. I assumed, that since we are *tête-à-tête* . . .

Mancini. But tell me, what kind of *tête-à-tête* is possible, between a clown and me? [*Laughs.*] You are stupid, HE. You should say what you want, and not ask questions!

Briquet. Three thousand francs, Count.

Mancini. Is that all? For Consuelo? All right. I'll tell the Baron.

Zinida. You took——

Briquet. Don't, Mother, don't.

Zinida. Count, you drew in advance, I have it written down, eighty francs and twenty centimes. Will you pay this money, too?

Mancini. Certainly, certainly. You will get three thousand and one hundred. [*Laughing.*] Twenty centimes! I never thought I could be so accurate! [*Seriously.*] Yes, my friends. My daughter Consuelo—the Countess—and the Baron, expressed their desire to bid farewell to the whole cast.

He. The Baron, too?

Mancini. Yes, Auguste, too. They want to do it during the intermission. Therefore, I ask you to gather here . . . the more decent ones . . . but please don't make it too crowded! HE, will you, sir, be kind enough to run into the buffet and tell them to bring right away a basket of champagne, bottles and glasses—you understand?

He. Yes, Count.

Mancini. Wait a minute, what's the hurry—what is this, a new costume? You are all burning like the devils in hell!

He. You do me too much honour, Count, I am not a devil. I am merely a poor sinner whom the devils are frying a little. [HE *goes out, bowing like a clown.*]

Mancini. A gifted chap, but too cunning.

Briquet. It's the Tango colour, in honour of your daughter, Count. He needs it for a new stunt, which he doesn't want to tell in advance. Don't you want to sit down, Count?

Mancini. Auguste is waiting for me, but . . . it's all right. [*Takes a seat.*] Nevertheless I am sorry to leave you, my friend. High society, certainly, prerogatives of the title, castles of exalted noblemen, but where could I find such freedom, and . . . such simplicity. . . . And besides, these announcements, these burning posters, which take your breath in the morning, they had something which summoned, which encouraged. . . . *There,* my friends, I shall become old.

Briquet. But pleasure of a higher kind, Count. Why are you silent, Zinida?

Zinida. I'm listening.

Mancini. By the way, my dear, how do you like my suit? You have wonderful taste. [*Spreads out his lace tie and lace cuffs.*]

Zinida. I like it. You look like a nobleman of the courts of long ago.

Mancini. Yes? But don't you think it is too conspicuous? Who wears lace and satin now? This dirty democracy will soon make us dress ourselves in sack cloth. [*With a sigh.*] Auguste told me that this jabot was out of place.

Zinida. The Baron is too severe.

Mancini. Yes, but it seems to me he is right. I am a little infected with your fancy. [HE *returns. Two waiters follow him, carrying a basket of champagne and glasses. They prepare everything on the table.*]

Mancini. Ah! *merci,* HE. But please, none of this bourgeois exploding of corks; be slower and more modest. Send the bill to Baron Regnard. Then, we will be here, Briquet. I must go.

Zinida [*looks at her watch*]. Yes, the act is going to end soon.

Mancini. Heavens! [*Disappears in a hurry.*]

Briquet. The devil take him!

Zinida [*pointing to the waiter*]. Not so loud, Louis!

Briquet. No! The devil take him! And why couldn't you help me, Mother? You left me alone to talk to him. High Society! High pleasures! Swindler. [He and Zinida *laugh. The waiters smile.*]

Briquet [*to the waiters*]. What are you laughing about? You can go. We will help ourselves. Whiskey and soda, Jean! [*In a low and angry voice.*] Champagne!

[*Enter* Jackson, *in his clown's costume.*]

Jackson. A whiskey and soda for me, too! At least I hear some laughter here. Those idiots have simply forgotten how to laugh. My sun was rising and setting and crawling all over the ring—and not a smile! Look at my bottom, shines like a mirror! [*Turns around quickly.*] Beg your pardon, Zinida. And you don't look badly to-night, He. Look out for your cheeks. I hate beauties.

Briquet. A benefit performance crowd!

Jackson [*looking in a hand mirror, correcting his make-up*]. In the orchestra there are some Barons and Egyptian mummies. I got a belly-ache from fright. I am an honest clown. I can't stand it when they look at me as if I had stolen a handkerchief. He, please give them a good many slaps to-night.

He. Be quiet, Jim, I shall avenge you. [He *goes out.*]

Zinda. And how is Bezano?

Jackson [*grumbling*]. Bezano! A crazy success. But he is crazy, he will break his neck to-morrow. Why does he run such a risk? Or perhaps he has wings, like a god? Devil take it. It's disgusting to look at him. It's not work any more.

Briquet. You are right, Jim! It is not work any more. To your health, old comrade, Jackson.

Jackson. To yours, Louis.

Briquet. It is not work any more, since these Barons came here! Do you hear? They are laughing. But I am indignant, I am indignant, Jim! What do they want here, these Barons? Let them steal hens in other hen roosts, and leave us in peace. Ah! Had I been Secretary of the Interior, I should have made an iron fence between us and those people.

Jackson. I am very sorry myself for our dear little Consuelo. I don't know why, but it seems to me that we all look to-day more like swindlers than honest artists. Don't you think so, Zinida?

Zinida. Everybody does what he wants. It's Consuelo's business and her father's.

Briquet. No, Mother, that's not true! Not everybody does what he wants, but it turns out this way . . . devil knows why.

[*Enter* Angelica *and* Thomas, *an athlete.*]

Angelica. Is this where we're going to have champagne?

Briquet. And you're glad already?

Thomas. There it is! Oh, oh, what a lot!

Angelica. The Count told me to come here. I met him.

Briquet [*angrily*]. All right, if he said so, but there is no reason to enjoy it. Look out, Angelica, you will have a bad end. I see you through and through. How does she work, Thomas?

Thomas. Very well.

Angelica [*in a low voice*]. How angry Papa Briquet is to-night.

[*Enter* He, Tilly, Polly, *and other actors, all in their costumes.*]

Tilly. Do you really want champagne?

Polly. I don't want it at all. Do you, Tilly?

Tilly. And I don't want it. He, did you see how the Count walks? [*Walks, imitating* Mancini. *Laughter.*]

Polly. Let me be the Baron. Take my arm. Look out, ass, you stepped on my beloved family tree!

Angelica. It'll soon be finished. Consuelo is galloping now. It is her waltz. What a success she is having!

[*All listen to the waltz.* Tilly *and* Polly *are singing it softly.*]

Angelica. She is so beautiful! Are those her flowers?

[*They listen. Suddenly, a crash as if a broken wall were tumbling down: applause, shouting, screaming; much motion on the stage. The actors are pouring champagne. New ones come in, talking and laughing. When they notice the director and the champagne, they become quiet and modest.*]

Voices. They're coming! What a suc-

cess! I should say, since all the orchestra seats . . . And what will it be when they see the Tango? Don't be envious, Alphonse.

Briquet. Silence! Not so much noise, please! Zinida, look here, don't be so quiet! High society!

[*Enter* CONSUELO, *on the arm of the* BARON, *who is stiff and erect. She is happy.* MANCINI, *serious and happy. Behind them, riders, actors, actresses. The* BARON *has in his button-hole a fiery-red rose. All applaud and cry: "Bravo, bravo!"*]

Consuelo. Friends . . . my dears . . . Father, I can't. . . . [*Throws herself into* MANCINI'S *arms, and hides her face on his shoulder.* MANCINI *looks with a smile over her head at the* BARON. BARON *smiles slightly, but remains earnest and motionless. A new burst of applause.*]

Briquet. Enough, children! Enough!

Mancini. Calm yourself, calm yourself, my child. How they all love you! [*Taking a step forward.*] Ladies and gentlemen, Baron Regnard did me the honour yesterday, to ask for the hand of my daughter, the Countess Veronica, whom you knew under the name of Consuelo. Please take your glasses.

Consuelo. No, I am still Consuelo, to-night, and I shall always be Consuelo! Zinida, dear! [*Falls on the neck of* ZINIDA. *Fresh applause.*]

Briquet. Stop it! Silence! Take your glasses. What are you standing here for? If you came, then take the glasses.

Tilly [*trembling*]. They are frightened. You take yours first, Papa, and we will follow.

[*They take the glasses.* CONSUELO *is near the* BARON, *holding the sleeve of his dress coat with her left hand. In her right hand, she has a glass of champagne, which spills over.*]

Baron. You are spilling your wine, Consuelo.

Consuelo. Ah! It is nothing! I am frightened, too. Are you, Father?

Mancini. Silly child. [*An awkward silence.*]

Briquet [*with a step forward*]. Countess! As the director of the circus, who was happy enough . . . to witness . . . many times . . . your successes . . .

Consuelo. I do not *like* this, Papa Briquet! I am Consuelo. What do you want to do with me? I shall cry. I don't want this "Countess." Give me a kiss, Briquet!

Briquet. Ah, Consuelo! Books have killed you.

[*Kisses her with tears. Laughter, applause. The clowns cluck like hens, bark, and express their emotions in many other ways. The motley crowd of clowns, which is ready for the pantomime, becomes more and more lively. The* BARON *is motionless, there is a wide space around him; the people touch glasses with him in a hurry, and go off to one side. With* CONSUELO *they clink willingly and cheerfully. She kisses the women.*]

Jackson. Silence! Consuelo, from to-day on, I extinguish my sun. Let the dark night come after you leave us. You were a nice comrade and worker, we all loved you and will love the traces of your little feet on the sand. Nothing remains to us!

Consuelo. You are so good, so good, Jim. So good that there is no one better. And your sun is better than all the other suns. I laughed so much at it. Alfred, dear, why don't you come? I was looking for you.

Bezano. My congratulations, Countess.

Consuelo. Alfred, I am Consuelo!

Bezano. When you are on horseback; but here—I congratulate you, Countess. [*He passes, only slightly touching* CONSUELO'S *glass.* CONSUELO *still holds it.* MANCINI *looks at the* BARON *with a smile. The latter is motionless.*]

Briquet. Nonsense, Bezano. You are making Consuelo unhappy. She is a good comrade.

Consuelo. No, it's all right.

Angelica. You'll dance the Tango with her to-night, so how is she a countess?

Tilly. May I clink glasses with you, Consuelo? You know Polly has died of grief already, and I am going to die. I have such a weak stomach.

[*Laughter;* BARON *shows slight displeasure. General motion.*]

Mancini. Enough, enough! The intermission is over.

Consuelo. Already? It's so nice here.

Briquet. I shall prolong it. They can wait. Tell them, Thomas.

Mancini. Auguste, the musicians of the orchestra, too, ask permission to congratulate you and Consuelo. Do you . . . ?

Baron. Certainly, certainly.

[*Enter crowd of musicians. The conductor, an old Italian, lifts his glass solemnly and without looking at the* BARON.]

The Conductor. Consuelo! They call you Countess here, but for me you were and are Consuelo.

Consuelo. Certainly!

Conductor. Consuelo! My violins and bassoons, my trumpets and drums, all are drinking your health. Be happy, dear child, as you were happy here. And we shall conserve for ever in our hearts the fair memory of our light-winged fairy, who guided our bows so long. I have finished! Give my love to our beautiful Italy. Consuelo.

[*Applause, compliments. The musicians one after another clink glasses and go out into the corridor.* CONSUELO *is almost crying.*]

Mancini. Don't be so sensitive, my child, it is indecent. Had I known that you would respond this way to this comedy—Auguste look how touched this little heart is!

Baron. Calm yourself, Consuelo.

Consuelo. It is all right. Ah, Father, listen!

[*The musicians are playing the Tango in the corridor. Exclamations.*]

Mancini. You see. It is for you.

Consuelo. They are so nice. My Tango! I want to dance. Who is going to dance with me? [*Looks around, seeking* BEZANO, *who turns away sadly.*] Who, then?

Voices. Baron! Let the Baron dance! Baron!

Baron. All right. [*Takes* CONSUELO'S *arm, and stands in the centre of a circle which is formed.*] I do not know how to dance the Tango, but I shall hold tight. Dance, Consuelo. [*He stands with legs spread, heavily and awkwardly, like an iron-moulded man, holding* CONSUELO'S *arm firmly and seriously.*]

Mancini [*applauding*]. Bravo! Bravo! [CONSUELO *makes a few restless movements and pulls her arm away.*]

Consuelo. No, I can't this way. How stupid! Let me go! [*She goes to* ZINIDA *and embraces her, as if hiding herself. The music still plays. The* BARON *goes off quietly to the side. There is an unfriendly silence among the cast. They shrug their shoulders.*]

Mancini [*alone*]. Bravo! Bravo! It is charming, it is exquisite!

Jackson. Not entirely, Count.

[TILLY *and* POLLY *imitate the* BARON *and* CONSUELO *without moving from their places.*]

Tilly [*shrieking*]. Let me go!

Polly. No, I'll not. Dance!

[*The music stops abruptly. General, too loud laughter; the clowns bark and roar.* PAPA BRIQUET *gesticulates, in order to re-establish silence. The* BARON *is apparently as indifferent as before.*]

Mancini. Really these vagabonds are becoming too impertinent. [*Shrugging his shoulders.*] It smells of the stable. You cannot help it, Auguste!

Baron. Don't be upset, Count.

He [*holding his glass, approaches the* BARON]. *Baron!* Will you permit me to make a toast?

Baron. Make it.

He. To your dance! [*Slight laughter in the crowd.*]

Baron. I don't dance!

He. Then another one, Baron. Let us drink to those who know how to wait longer, until they get it.

Baron. I do not accept any toasts which I do not understand. Say it more simply.

[*Voice of a woman: "Bravo,* HE!" *Slight laughter.* MANCINI *says something hastily to* BRIQUET; *the latter spreads his arms in gesture of helplessness.* JACKSON *takes* HE *by the arm.*]

Jackson. Beat it, HE! The Baron doesn't like jokes.

He. But I want to drink with the Baron. What can be simpler? simpler? Baron, let us drink to the very small distance

which will always remain 'twixt the cup and the lip! [*Spills his wine, and laughs.*]

[*The* Baron *turns his back on him, indifferently. The music plays in the ring. The bell rings.*]

Briquet [*relieved*]. There! To the ring, ladies and gentlemen, to the ring, to the ring!

[*The actresses run out. The crowd becomes smaller; laughter and voices.*]

Mancini [*much excited, whispers to the* Baron]. "Auguste, Auguste——"

Briquet [*to* Zinida]. Thank heaven they're beginning. Ah, Mother, I asked you . . . but you want a scandal by all means, and you always——

Zinida. Let me alone, Louis.

[He *approaches* Consuelo, *who is alone.*]

Consuelo. He, deary, how are you? I thought you didn't want even to come near me. [*In a low voice.*] Did you notice Bezano?

He. I was waiting for my turn, Queen. It was so difficult to get through the crowd to approach you.

Consuelo. Through the crowd? [*With a sad smile.*] I am quite alone. What do you want, Father?

Mancini. Child! Auguste . . .

Consuelo [*pulling away her hand*]. Let me alone! I'll soon be—Come here, He. What did you say to him? They all laughed. I couldn't understand. What?

He. I joked, Consuelo.

Consuelo. Please don't, He, don't make him angry; he is so terrible. Did you see how he pressed my arm? I wanted to scream. [*With tears in her eyes.*] He hurt me!

He. It's not too late yet. Refuse him.

Consuelo. It *is* too late, He. Don't talk about it.

He. Do you want it? I will take you away from here.

Consuelo. Where to? [*Laughs.*] Ah, my dear little silly boy, where could you take me to? All right, be quiet. How pale you are! You too, love me? Don't He, please don't! Why do they all love me?

He. You are so beautiful!

Consuelo. No, no. It's not true. They must not love me. I was still a little cheerful, but when they began to speak . . . so nicely . . . and about Italy . . . and to bid farewell, as if I were dying, I thought I should begin to cry. Don't talk, don't talk, but drink to . . . my happiness. [*With a sad smile.*] To my happiness, He. What are you doing?

He. I am throwing away the glass from which you drank with the others. I shall give you another one. Wait a minute. [*Goes to pour champagne.* Consuelo *walks about thoughtfully. Almost all are gone. Only the principal figures are left.*]

Mancini [*coming to her*]. But it is really becoming indecent, Veronica. Auguste is so nice, he is waiting for you, and you talk here with this clown. Some stupid secrets. They're looking at you—it is becoming noticeable. It is high time, Veronica, to get rid of these habits.

Consuelo [*loudly*]. Let me alone, Father! I want to do so, and will do so. They are all my friends. Do you hear? Let me alone!

Baron. Don't, Count. Please, Consuelo, talk to whomever you please and as much as you want. Would you like a cigar, Count? Dear Briquet, please order them to prolong the intermission a little more.

Briquet. With pleasure, Baron. The orchestra crowd can be a little angry. [*Goes, and returns shortly.* He *gives a glass to* Consuelo.]

He. Here is your glass. To your happiness, to your freedom, Consuelo.

Consuelo. And where is yours? We must touch our glasses.

He. You leave half.

Consuelo. Must I drink so much? He, deary, I shall become drunk. I still have to ride.

He. No, you will not be drunk. Dear little girl, did you forget that I am your magician? Be quiet and drink. I charmed the wine. My witchery is in it. Drink, goddess.

Consuelo [*lingering*]. What kind eyes you have. But why are you so pale?

He. Because I love you. Look at my kind eyes and drink; give yourself up to my charms, goddess! You shall fall asleep, and wake again, as before. Do you remember? And you shall see your country, your sky. . . .

Consuelo [*bringing the glass to her lips*]. I shall see all this; is that true?

He [*growing paler*]. Yes! Awake, goddess, and remember the time when, covered with snow-white sea-foam, thou didst emerge from the sky blue waters. Remember heaven, and the low eastern wind, and the whisper of the foam at thy marble feet. . . .

Consuelo [*drinking*]. There! Look! Just a half! Take it. But what is the matter with you? Are you laughing or crying?

He. I am laughing and crying.

Mancini [*pushing* He *away, slightly*]. Enough, Countess, my patience is exhausted. If Auguste is good enough to allow it, then I, your Father—Your arm, Countess! Will you step aside, sir?

Consuelo. I am tired.

Mancini. You are not too tired to chatter and drink wine with a clown, and when your duty calls you—Briquet! Tell them to ring the bell. It is time.

Consuelo. I am tired, Father.

Zinida. Count, it is cruel. Don't you see how pale she has become?

Baron. What is the matter with you, dear little Consuelo?

Consuelo. Nothing.

Zinida. She simply needs a rest, Baron. She hasn't sat down yet . . . and so much excitement . . . Sit down here, dear child. Cover yourself and rest a little. Men are so cruel!

Consuelo. I will have to work. [*Closing her eyes.*] And the roses, are they ready?

Zinida. Ready, dear, ready. You will have such an extraordinary carpet. You will gallop as if on air. Rest.

Polly. Do you want some moosic? We will play you a song; do you want it?

Consuelo [*smiling, eyes closed*]. Yes, I do.

[*The clowns play a soft and naïve song; tilly-polly, tilly-polly. General silence.* He *sits in the corner with his face turned away.* Jackson *watches him out of the corner of his eye, and drinks wine, lazily. The* Baron, *in his usual pose, wide and heavily spread legs, looks at the pale face of* Consuelo, *with his bulging motionless eyes.*]

Consuelo [*with a sudden cry*]. Ah! Pain!

Zinida. What is it, Consuelo?

Mancini. My child! Are you sick? Calm yourself.

Baron [*growing pale*]. Wait a moment. . . . She was too much excited. . . . Consuelo!

Consuelo [*gets up, looking before her with wide-open eyes, as if she were listening to something within herself*]. Ah! I feel pain. Here at the heart. Father, what is it? I am afraid. What is it? My feet . . . my feet too . . . I can't stand. . . . [*Falls on divan, her eyes wide open.*]

Mancini [*running about*]. Bring a doctor! Heavens, it is terrible! Auguste, Baron . . . It never happened to her. It is nerves, nerves. . . . Calm yourself, calm, child——

Briquet. Bring a doctor! [*Somebody runs for a doctor.*]

Jackson [*in a voice full of fear*]. He, what is the matter with you?

He. It is death, Consuelo, my little queen. I killed you. You are dying.

[He *cries, loudly and bitterly.* Consuelo *with a scream, closes her eyes, and becomes silent and quiet. All are in terrible agitation. The* Baron *is motionless, and sees only* Consuelo.]

Mancini [*furious*]. You are lying, rascal! Damned clown! What did you give her? You poisoned her! Murderer! Bring a doctor!

He. A doctor will not help. You are dying, my little queen. Consuelo! Consuelo!

[Bezano *rushes in, cries: "Briquet!" becomes silent and looks with horror at* Consuelo. *Somebody else comes in.* Briquet *is making gestures for someone to close the door.*]

Consuelo [*in a dull and distant voice*]. You are joking, He? Don't frighten me. I am so frightened. Is that death? I don't want it. Ah, He, my darling He, tell me that you are joking, I am afraid, my dear, golden He!

[He *pushes away the* Baron, *with a commanding gesture, and stands in his place near* Consuelo. *The* Baron *stands as before, seeing only* Consuelo.]

He. Yes, I am joking. Don't you hear how I laugh, Consuelo? They all laugh at you here, my silly child. Don't laugh, Jim.

She is tired, and wants to sleep. How can you laugh, Jim! Sleep my dear, sleep my heart, sleep my love.

Consuelo. Yes, I have no more pain. Why did you joke that way, and frighten me? Now I laugh at myself. You told me, didn't you, that I . . . should . . . live . . . eternally?

He. Yes, Consuelo! You shall live eternally. Sleep. Be calm. [*Lifts up his arms, as if straining with all his forces to lift her soul higher.*]. How easy it is now! —How much light, how many lights are burning about you. . . . The light is blinding you.

Consuelo. Yes, light . . . Is that the ring?

He. No, it is the sea and the sun . . . what a sun! Don't you feel that you are the foam, white sea-foam, and you are flying to the sun? You feel light, you have no body, you are flying higher, my love!

Consuelo. I am flying. I am the sea-foam, and this is the sun, it shines . . . so strong. . . . I feel well.

[*She dies. Silence.* He *stays a moment with lifted arms, then takes a long look, lets his arms fall, and shakingly goes off to one side.* He *stands still for a moment, then sits down, drops his head on his hands, and struggles lonesomely with the torpidity of coming death.*]

Briquet [*slowly*]. She has fallen asleep, Mother?

Zinida [*dropping the dead hand*]. I am afraid not. . . . Step aside, Louis. Baron, it is better for you to step aside. Baron! Do you hear me? [*Weeps.*] She is dead, Louis.

[*The clowns and* Briquet *are crying.* Mancini *is overwhelmed. The* Baron *and* He *are motionless, each in his place.*]

Jackson [*drawing out a large prismatic clown's handkerchief to wipe away his tears*] Faded, like a flower. Sleep, little Consuelo! The only thing that remains of you is the trace of your little feet on the sand. [*Cries.*] Ah, what did you do, what did you do, He! . . . It would have been better if you had never come to us.

[*There is music in the ring.*]

Briquet [*gesticulating*]. The music! Stop the music! They are crazy there. What a misfortune!

[*Someone runs off.* Zinida *approaches the crying* Bezano *and strokes his bowed, pomaded head. When he notices her, he catches her hand and presses it to his eyes. The* Baron *takes out the rose from his button-hole, tears off the petals, and drops it, grinding it with his foot. A few pale faces peer through the door, the same masquerade crowd.*]

Zinida [*over the head of* Bezano]. Louis, we must call the police.

Mancini [*awakening from his stupor, screams*]. The police! Call the police! It's a murder! I am Count Mancini, I am Count Mancini! They will cut off your head, murderer, damned clown, thief! I myself will kill you, rascal! Ah, you! [He *lifts his heavy head with difficulty.*]

He. They will cut off my head? And what more . . . Your Excellency?

Baron. Sir! Listen, sir! I am going for the police. Stop it, sir. [*He suddenly takes a step forward and looking* He *in the eyes, speaks in a hoarse voice, with a cough, holding one hand at his throat.*] I am the witness. I saw. I am a witness. I saw how he put poison . . . I——

[*He leaves the room, suddenly, with the same straight, heavy steps. All move away from him, frightened.* He *drops his head again. From time to time a tremor shakes his body.*]

Jackson [*clasping his hands*]. Then it is all true? Poisoned! What a vile man you are, He. Is this the way to play? Now wait for the last slap of the executioner! [*Makes the gesture around his neck, of the guillotine.* Tilly *and* Polly *repeat the gesture.*]

Zinida. Leave his soul alone, Jim. He was a man, and he loved. Happy Consuelo!

[*A shot is heard in the corridor.* Thomas, *frightened, runs in and points to his head.*]

Thomas. Baron . . . Baron . . . his head . . . He shot himself . . .

Briquet [*throwing his arms up*]. God! What is it? The Baron? What a calamity for our circus.

Mancini. The Baron? The Baron? No. What are you standing here for? Ah!

Briquet. Calm down, Count. Who would have believed it? Such a respectable . . . gentleman!

He [*lifting his head with difficulty; he sees only dimly with his dulled eyes*] What more? What happened?

Thomas. The Baron shot himself. Honestly. Straight here! He's lying out yonder.

He [*thinking it over*]. Baron? [*Laughs.*] Then the Baron burst?

Jackson. Stop it! It's shameless. A man died and you . . . What's the matter with you, He?

He [*stands up, lifted to his feet by the last gleam of consciousness and life, speaks strongly and indignantly*]. You loved her so much, Baron? So much? My Consuelo? And you want to be ahead of me even *there?* No! I am coming. We shall prove then whose she is to be for ever. . . .

[He *catches at his throat, falls on his back. People run to him. General agitation.*]

THE END

LA MALQUERIDA

By JACINTO BENAVENTE

Translated from the Spanish by JOHN GARRETT UNDERHILL

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JACINTO BENAVENTE AND HIS PLAYS

Jacinto Benavente, the author of *La Malquerida,* is not only the most distinguished of modern Spanish dramatists but is also one of the great original forces in modern drama. He was born in Madrid in 1866; studied law; travelled with a circus; became an actor; and mingled with persons of all sorts and degrees. Through his years of wandering he gathered much of that knowledge of life and the stage which characterize the prolific product that was to follow. With the production of his satirical comedy *The Governor's Lady* his fame was secure; and from that time he has continued to produce plays with all the fecundity characteristic of the Spanish genius. His popularity increased with the number of his plays. At length he was elected a member of the Spanish Academy, and, in 1922, was awarded the Nobel prize.

A variety of factors renders Benavente one of the most complex and perplexing, as well as one of the most interesting, of modern dramatists. Simply as a dramatist of new Spain, he is a product of the "movement of 1898" toward the creation of a national literature unfettered by tradition. But he is also a part of the general revolutionary movement in the theatre that in the late nineteenth century asserted itself in the experimental playhouses of Paris, Berlin, and London, the outcome of which was the sincerity that marks the work of Hauptmann in Germany, Brieux in France, and Shaw and Galsworthy in England. Thus it is not surprising that many foreign influences have affected the work of Benavente, and that certain of its multifarious phases are reminiscent, for instance, of the Italian, Pirandello, the Russian, Andreyev, and the Austrian, Schnitzler. But Benavente is not only modern and cosmopolitan; he is also the inheritor of the rich traditions of the Spanish theatre, and is certainly their debtor. Thus, as a man of the theatre simply, he is of both the new and the old. Again, in his capacity as a critic of life, while he cherishes essentially Spanish traditions and ideas, he yet maintains an outlook upon the world clear-eyed and characteristically modern. Finally, and as an additional factor in his complexity, his plays (there are almost a hundred of them) not only vastly outnumber those of any other great modern dramatist, but cover a wider range in technique, subject-matter, tone, and style than do those of any two or even three of his contemporaries. They include satirical comedies; romantic comedies; realistic dramas; romantic dramas; psychological plays, both realistic and fantastic; pure fantasies, tragic or comic; historical plays; moralistic plays; farces; fairy plays; and pageants. Here is represented every method of technique from naturalism to sheer fantasy; every social class from peasant to king; every tone from farce to tragedy.

Through it all, Benavente is supremely intellectual and utterly sophisticated. With all his purely theatrical dexterity, he is primarily the dramatist of character and ideas. His attitude toward life is usually that of the observer and analyst, accepting conditions without protest. This is as true of *The Governor's Lady* as of the witty yet profound searching of life's ultimate values in *The Bonds of Interest* and the stark human passion of *La Malquerida.* In his later plays he has become more of the avowed moralizer and propagandist.

La Malquerida is the representative drama of rural life in modern Spain. It is interesting to compare with this vivid piece another powerful Spanish play, *Marta of the Lowlands,* by the Catalan dramatist Angel Guimera; but no matter with what similar play of any country it be compared, *La Malquerida* holds its own. Though a drama of elemental passions, it is yet suffused with the spirit of the "new psychology". Powerful theatric situations are saved from being mere melodrama by the fact that they are essentially the inevitable expression of profound emotion, and hence are lifted up to the plane of authentic tragedy.

La Malquerida was first produced in Madrid in 1912, with Maria Guerrero in the rôle of Raimunda, and met with immediate and unqualified success. In 1920 it was produced in New York, under the title of *The Passion Flower,* and again was favorably received. In May, 1926, it was presented in Spanish in New York by Maria Guerrero.

CHARACTERS

RAIMUNDA

ACACIA, *daughter of* RAIMUNDA

JULIANA, *an old servant in* RAIMUNDA'S *household*

DOÑA ISABEL, MILAGROS, *daughter of* DOÑA ISABEL, FIDELA, ENGRACIA, BERNABEA, GASPARA — *friends and neighbors of* RAIMUNDA

ESTEBAN, *husband of* RAIMUNDA *and stepfather of* ACACIA

NORBERT, *cousin of* ACACIA *and her rejected suitor*

FAUSTINO, *the betrothed of* ACACIA

TÍO EUSEBIA, *father of* FAUSTINO

BERNABÉ, RUBIO — *employes on* RAIMUNDA'S *farm*

The action takes place in Castile at the present day

LA MALQUERIDA

ACT ONE

A room in a rich farmer's house, situated on the outskirts of a pueblo, or small town.

As the curtain rises, RAIMUNDA, ACACIA, DOÑA ISABEL, MILAGROS, FIDELA, ENGRACIA, GASPARA, *and* BERNABEA *are bidding farewell to four or five women and young girls who are taking leave. While the others stand,* DOÑA ISABEL *remains seated.*

Gaspara. God be with you! Good-by, Raimunda.

Bernabea. God be with you, Doña Isabel —and you, too, Acacia, and your mother. May everything turn out for the best.

Raimunda. Thanks. May we all live to see it. Go down with them, Acacia.

All. Good-by! Good-by!

[*The women and girls retire, keeping up an animated chatter.* ACACIA *accompanies them.*]

Doña Isabel. Bernabea is a nice girl.

Engracia. It is only a year since she got over that trouble. No one would ever believe it to look at her now.

Doña Isabel. I hear that she is going to be married.

Fidela. Yes, come next fiesta—God willing and San Roque.

Doña Isabel. I am always the last person in the village to pick up gossip. When you have nothing but trouble at home, naturally you lose interest in what is taking place outside.

Engracia. How is your husband?

Doña Isabel. He varies—up and down. The rest of us are thoroughly worn out. We are not able to leave the house, not even to attend mass upon Sundays. I am used to it myself, but it is hard on my daughter.

Engracia. I think you make a mistake to keep her at home so much. This is a great year for weddings.

Doña Isabel. But not for her. I am afraid that we shall never be able to find a man who measures up to her expectations.

Fidela. All the same, it never struck me that she was born to be a nun. Some day she will happen on the right one.

Doña Isabel. How are you pleased with this match, Raimunda? I must say you don't seem altogether cheerful about it.

Raimunda. A wedding is always something of an experiment.

Engracia. If you aren't satisfied, I am sure I don't know who could ever be. Your daughter has had the pick of the entire village.

Fidela. She's not likely to want for anything, either. We all know how well they will both be provided for, which is not a thing you can afford to overlook.

Raimunda. Milagros, run down-stairs and enjoy yourself with Acacia and the boys. I hate to see you sitting there all alone in a corner.

Doña Isabel. Yes, do go down.—The child is as innocent as the day that God made her.

Milagros. Excuse me.

Raimunda. We might all take another glass and some *bizcochos.*

Doña Isabel. Thanks, I have had enough.

Raimunda. No, no, come, everybody. This is nothing.

Doña Isabel. Acacia doesn't seem as happy as you might expect, either, considering that her engagement was only announced to-day.

Raimunda. She is as innocent, too, as God made her. I never saw any one like her; she is so silent. She distracts me. For weeks together she has not one word to say. Then there are times when she begins to talk, and her tongue runs until it fairly takes your breath away. It is a terrible thing to hear.

Engracia. Naturally, you have spoiled her. After you lost the three boys she was all that you had, and you were too careful. Her father would have plucked the birds out of the air if she had asked for them, and you were no better. When he died—God rest his soul—then the child was jealous of you. She didn't like it when you married again, and she has never gotten over that grudge either.

Raimunda. But what was I to do? I didn't want to marry again. I should never have thought of it if my brothers hadn't turned out the way that they did. If we had not had a man in the house to look after us, my

daughter and I would have been in the street before this, and you know it.

Doña Isabel. Yes, this world is no place for single women. You were left a widow very young.

Raimunda. But I can't see why my daughter should be jealous. I am her mother, yet it would be hard to say which of us loves or spoils her the most. Esteban has never treated her like a stepdaughter.

Doña Isabel. No wonder; you had no children of your own.

Raimunda. He never comes nor goes without bringing her a present. He never thinks of such a thing with me—although, of course, I have no feeling. She is my daughter; it only makes me love him more to see how fond he is of her. You won't believe it when I tell you, but she would never let him kiss her even when she was a child, much less now. I have seldom had to lay my hand on her, but whenever I have, it was on that account.

Fidela. Nobody can make me believe, just the same, that your daughter isn't in love with her cousin.

Raimunda. Norbert? She turned him off herself between night and morning, and that was the end of it. That is another thing I can't understand. We never could find out what did happen between them.

Fidela. Nor anybody else. Nobody has ever been able to explain it. There must have been some reason, but what it was is a mystery.

Engracia. Well, she never seemed to regret it, which is more than I can say for him. She never looked at him again, but he hasn't changed. When he heard that Faustino was coming over with his father to-day to settle the matter and arrange things, he turned on his heel, took his gun, and went straight up to Los Berrocales. People who saw him said that you would have thought that it had broken his heart.

Raimunda. Neither Esteban nor I influenced her in the least. She broke with Norbert herself, just as they were ready to publish the banns. Everybody knows it. Then she consented to see Faustino. He always had a fancy for her. His father is a great friend of Esteban's—they belong to the same party and always work together. They have known each other for a long time. Whenever we went to Encinar for the Feast of the Virgin—or for any other fiesta—or if they were the ones who came here, it was easy to see that the boy was nervous. When she was around he didn't know what to do. He knew that there was something between her and her cousin, but he never said one word until the break came, whatever the reason was, which we don't know—no, not one; but as soon as they heard that she was done with her cousin, Faustino's father spoke to Esteban, and Esteban spoke to me, and I spoke to my daughter, and she seemed to be pleased; so now they are going to be married. That is all there is to it. If she is not satisfied, then God have mercy on her soul, because we are only doing it to please her. She has had her own way in everything.

Doña Isabel. Then she ought to be happy. Why not? The boy is a fine fellow. Everybody says so.

Engracia. Yes, we all feel as if he belonged in the village. He lives so near by, and his family is so well known that nobody ever thinks of them as strangers.

Fidela. Tío Eusebio owns more land here than at Encinar.

Engracia. Certainly, if you stop to count. He inherited everything from his Uncle Manolito, and when the town lands were sold, two years ago, they went to him.

Doña Isabel. The family is the richest in the neighborhood.

Fidela. Undoubtedly. There may be four brothers, but each of them will come into a fortune.

Engracia. Your daughter is not going barefoot, either.

Raimunda. No, she is an only child and will inherit everything. Esteban has taken good care of the farm which she had from her father; he could not have done more if she had been his own child.

[*The Angelus sounds.*]

Doña Isabel. The Angelus! [*The women mumble the words of the prayer.*] It is time for us to be going, Raimunda. Telesforo expects his supper early—if the nibble of nothing which he takes can be called supper.

Engracia. It is time for us all to go.

Fidela. We were all thinking the same thing.

Raimunda. But won't you stay to supper? I don't urge Doña Isabel—I know she ought not to leave her husband. He is impatient to see her back.

Engracia. Yes. We all have husbands to look after. Thanks just the same.

Doña Isabel. I suppose the young man stays to supper?

Raimunda. No, he is going home with his father to Encinar. They cannot spend the night. There is no moon, so they should have been on the road long ago. It is getting late and the days are growing shorter. Before you know it, it is black night.

Engracia. I hear them coming up now to say good-by.

Raimunda. I thought so.

[Acacia, Milagros, Esteban, Tío Eusebio, *and* Faustino *enter.*]

Esteban. Raimunda, here are Tío Eusebio and Faustino to say good-by.

Eusebio. We must be off before dark. The roads are in terrible shape after the heavy rains.

Esteban. There are some bad stretches.

Doña Isabel. Well, what has the boy to say for himself? I suppose he doesn't remember me. It is five years since I have seen him.

Eusebio. Don't you remember Doña Isabel?

Faustino. I do, *sí señor.* I was afraid she didn't remember me.

Doña Isabel. No fear of that! My husband was *alcalde* at the time, when you gave us that awful fright, running after the bull. If you had been killed, I don't know what would have happened. I didn't enjoy it. God help San Roque!—it would have put an end to his fiesta. We certainly thought you were dead.

Engracia. Julian, Eudosia's husband, was caught that year too.

Faustino. I remember; *sí, señora.*

Eusebio. He remembers perfectly, because I gave him a sound thrashing when he got home—which he deserved.

Faustino. I was a boy at the time.

Doña Isabel. Yes—the boy of it! However, you have picked out the finest girl in the village, and she will have no reason to regret her choice either. But we must be going. You have business of your own to attend to.

Esteban. No, they have attended to everything already.

Doña Isabel. Good night, then. Come, Milagros.

Acacia. I want her to stay to supper, but she is afraid to ask you. Do let her stay, Doña Isabel!

Raimunda. Yes, do. Bernabé and Juliana will see her home afterward, and Esteban can go along, too, if necessary.

Doña Isabel. No, we will send for her. You can stay, to please Acacia.

Raimunda. They have so many things to talk over.

Doña Isabel. God be with you. Adios, Tío Eusebio and Esteban.

Eusebio. Adios, Doña Isabel. My best sympathy to your husband.

Doña Isabel. Which he appreciates, coming from you.

Engracia. Good-by! A safe return!

Fidela. God be with you!

[*The women go out.*]

Eusebio. Doña Isabel looks remarkably young. She must be my age at least. Well, "To have and to hold is to prepare to grow old," as the proverb has it. Doña Isabel was one of the best of them in her day, and in her day there were plenty.

Esteban. Sit down, Tío Eusebio. What is your hurry?

Eusebio. No, don't tempt me; it's time to go. Night is coming on. Don't bother about us. We have the hands along and shan't need you.

Esteban. No, the walk will do me good. I'll see you to the *arroyo* at least.

[Raimunda, Acacia, *and* Milagros *re-enter.*]

Eusebio. If you young folks have anything to say, now is the time for you to say it.

Acacia. No, we have settled everything.

Eusebio. So you think.

Raimunda. Come, come! Don't you try to embarrass my daughter, Tío Eusebio.

Acacia. Thanks for everything.

Eusebio. What? Is that a way to thank me?

Acacia. It was a lovely present.

Eusebio. The showiest thing we could find.

Raimunda. Entirely too much so for a farmer's daughter.

Eusebio. Too much? Not a bit of it! If I'd had my way, it would have had more jewels in it than the Holy Monstrance at Toledo. Give your mother-in-law a good hug.

Raimunda. Yes, come, boy. I must learn to love you or I shall never forgive you for taking her away. My heart goes with her.

Esteban. Now don't begin to cry! Come, Acacia! You don't want to pass yourself off for a Magdalen.

Milagros. Raimunda! Acacia! [*Bursts into tears also.*]

Esteban. That's right—all together! Come, come!

Eusebio. Don't be foolish! Tears are for the dead. You are only going to be married. Try to be happy and enjoy yourselves; everybody is willing. Adios and good night!

Raimunda. Adios, Tío Eusebio. Tell Julia that I don't know whether I shall ever be able to forgive her for not coming over to-day.

Eusebio. You know how bad her sight is. We'd have had to hitch up the cart, and it was up at Los Berrocales. We are beginning to slaughter.

Raimunda. Tell her how sorry I am. May she be better soon.

Eusebio. Thanks to you.

Raimunda. Now you had better be going. It is getting dark. [*To* ESTEBAN.] Don't be long.

Eusebio. I tell him not to come.

Esteban. Nonsense! It isn't any trouble. I'll go as far as the *arroyo*. Don't wait supper for me.

Raimunda. No, we will wait. We're not anxious to eat alone to-night. Milagros won't mind if we are late.

Milagros. It makes no difference to me.

Eusebio. God be with you all! Good-by!

Raimunda. No, we are coming down to see you out.

Faustino. I. . . . I have something to say to Acacia first. . . .

Eusebio. It will have to wait until to-morrow. You have had the whole day to yourselves.

Faustino. Yes, but with so many people around, I had no chance. . . .

Eusebio. Before we were through I knew we were going to get some of this nonsense.

Faustino. It isn't nonsense. Only I promised mother before we started to give Acacia this scapulary. The nuns in the convent made it on purpose for her.

Acacia. How lovely!

Milagros. Oh! The Blessed Virgin of Carmen—with spangles all over!

Raimunda. Very pretty. My daughter was always devoted to the Virgin. Thank your mother for us. We appreciate it.

Faustino. It has been blessed.

Eusebio. Good! Now you have got that off your mind. I wonder what your mother would have thought if we'd taken it home again with us? I never saw such a boy! I wasn't so backward in my day. I am sure I don't know whom he does take after.

[*All go out. For a moment the stage remains deserted. Meanwhile it continues to grow darker. Presently* RAIMUNDA, ACACIA, *and* MILAGROS *reappear.*]

Raimunda. They have made a long day of it. It is night before they start. How do you feel, my dear? Are you happy?

Acacia. You can see for yourself.

Raimunda. I can, can I? That is exactly what I want to do: see for myself. Nobody can ever tell how you feel.

Acacia. I am tired out.

Raimunda. It has certainly been a long day. I haven't had a minute's rest since five o'clock in the morning.

Milagros. Everybody has been here to congratulate you.

Raimunda. The whole village, you might say, beginning with the priest, who was among the first. We paid him for a mass, and gave him ten loaves of bread besides for the poor. In our happiness it is only right to remember others who are not so fortunate. Praise God, we want for nothing! Where are the matches?

Acacia. Here they are, mother.

Raimunda. Light the lamp, dear. It makes me feel sad to sit in the dark. [*Calling.*] Juliana! Juliana! I wonder where she is?

Juliana. [*Down-stairs.*] What do you want?

Raimunda. Bring up the broom and dustpan.

Juliana. [*Down-stairs.*] In a minute.

Raimunda. I had better change my skirt while I think of it. Nobody will be in now; it's so late.

Acacia. I might take off my dress.

Raimunda. What for? There is nothing for you to do. You have been busy all day.

[JULIANA *enters.*]

Juliana. Show me that dust——

Raimunda. Stand the broom in the corner and take these things away. Mind you scour them until they are clean; then put them back in the cupboard. Be careful with those glasses! They are our best.

Juliana. Could I eat a cake?

Raimunda. Of course you can!—though I don't see how you manage to hold so much.

Juliana. I haven't touched a thing this whole day, God help me! I am my mother's own daughter. Haven't I passed cake and wine to the entire village? Everybody has been here to-day. That shows you what people think of this house—yes, and what

they think of Tío Eusebio and his family. Wait till you see the wedding! I know somebody who is going to give her a new gold piece, and somebody who is going to give her a silk embroidered quilt that has flowers all over it, so lifelike that the first thing she will want to do is pick them off of it. That will be a great day for her, praise God! Not one of us but will laugh and cry then, and I will be the first—after her mother; she will be first because it is her right, but you know me. I love you all in this house. Besides, you make me think of my dead daughter. She looked just like you do when she died, and we buried her.

Raimunda. Never mind that, Juliana. Go along and don't dig up any more of your troubles. We have enough of our own already.

Juliana. God grant that I may never be a trouble to you! But everything goes topsy-turvy with me to-day, around and around, and every which way. The more you enjoy yourself the sadder it makes you feel. God forbid that I should ever drag in this child's poor dead father, who rests in heaven now, God bless him! But I wish he could have seen her to-day! He was fond of her.

Raimunda. That will do, Juliana! That will do.

Juliana. Don't talk like that to me, Raimunda. It's like a blow in the face, like beating a faithful hound. That's what I have been to you and your daughter and your house—a faithful hound, that has eaten your bread, God willing, in season and out—yes, and kept her self-respect while she was about it, and you know it. [*Goes out.*]

Raimunda. Juliana!—She is right, though. She has always been like a faithful hound—faithful and loyal to us and our house. [*She begins to sweep.*]

Acacia. Mother——

Raimunda. Did you speak?

Acacia. Will you let me have the key to this chest of drawers? I want to show Milagros some of my things.

Raimunda. Yes, here it is; take the bunch. Sit down and rest while I go and keep an eye on the supper. [*She takes the broom and goes out.*

[Acacia *and* Milagros *seat themselves on the floor before the chest of drawers and open the lower drawer or compartment.*]

Acacia. These earrings were a present from—well, from Esteban, since my mother isn't here. She always wants me to call him father.

Milagros. Don't you know that he loves you?

Acacia. Yes, but you can have only one father and mother. He brought me these handkerchiefs, too, from Toledo. The nuns embroidered the initials. See all these postcards—aren't they pretty?

Milagros. What lovely ladies!

Acacia. Yes, they're actresses from Madrid, or from Paris in France. Look at these boys—He brought me this box, too; it had candy in it.

Milagros. I don't see how you can say then. . . .

Acacia. I don't say anything. I know he loves me, but I'd rather have been left alone with my mother.

Milagros. You don't mean to tell me that your mother loves you any less on his account?

Acacia. I don't know. She's wrapped up in him. How do I know, if she had to choose between me and that man. . . .

Milagros. I think it's wicked to talk like that. Suppose your mother hadn't married again, what would she do now when you get married? She would have no one to live with.

Acacia. You don't suppose that I would ever have gotten married, do you, if I had been living alone with my mother?

Milagros. Of course you would! What difference would it make?

Acacia. Could I be as happy anywhere else as living here alone with my mother?

Milagros. Don't be foolish. Everybody knows what a nice stepfather you have. If he hadn't been good there would have been talk, and I would have heard it. So would you and your mother.

Acacia. I don't say that he isn't good. But all the same I wouldn't have married if my mother hadn't married again.

Milagros. Do you know what I think?

Acacia. What?

Milagros. People are right when they say that you don't love Faustino. The one that you love is Norbert.

Acacia. That's a lie! How could I love him?—after the way that he treated me.

Milagros. Everybody says that you were the one who turned him off.

Acacia. I did, did I? Yes, I suppose it was my fault! Anyway, we won't talk about it.

What do they know? I love Faustino better than I ever did Norbert.

Milagros. I hope you do. Otherwise you oughtn't to marry him. Did you hear that Norbert left the village this morning? He didn't want to be around.

Acacia. What does he care? Why to-day more than any other? It is nothing to him. Here is the last letter he wrote me—after everything was over. I never mean to see him again; I don't know what I am keeping it for. It would be more sensible to tear it up. [*She tears the letter into small pieces.*] There! That ends it.

Milagros. What is the matter with you? You are all excited.

Acacia. It's what he says. Now I am going to burn the pieces.

Milagros. Look out! The lamp will explode.

Acacia. [*Opening the window.*] To the road with you! I'll scatter the ashes. . . . The wind blows them away. . . . It is over now, and I am glad of it. Did you ever see such a dark night?

Milagros. [*Following her to the window.*] It is black as pitch—no moon, no stars. . . .

Acacia. What was that?

Milagros. Somebody slammed a door.

Acacia. It sounded to me like a shot.

Milagros. Nonsense! Who would be out shooting at this hour? Unless there is a fire somewhere. . . . No, I don't see any glow in the sky.

Acacia. I am frightened. Yes, I am——

Milagros. Don't be silly!

Acacia. [*Running suddenly to the door.*] Mother! Mother!

Raimunda. [*Down-stairs.*] What is it?

Acacia. Did you hear anything?

Raimunda. [*Down-stairs.*] Yes. I sent Juliana to find out. It's all right.

Acacia. Oh, mother!

Raimunda. Don't be afraid! I am coming up.

Acacia. It was a shot! I know it was a shot!

Milagros. Suppose it was? What of it?

Acacia. God help us! [RAIMUNDA *enters.*]

Raimunda. Did it frighten you? Nothing is the matter.

Acacia. Mother, you are frightened yourself.

Raimunda. Because you are. Naturally, I was frightened at first—your father hasn't come back. But it is silly. Nothing could have happened. What was that? Do you hear? Some one is down-stairs. God help us!

Acacia. Mother! Mother!

Milagros. What do they say? What are they talking about?

Raimunda. Stay where you are. I am going down.

Acacia. Mother, don't you go!

Raimunda. I can't make out what they say. . . . I am too excited. . . . Oh, Esteban, my heart! May no harm have come to you! [*She rushes out.*]

Milagros. There is a crowd down-stairs. They are coming in. I can't make out what they say. . . .

Acacia. Something has happened! Something awful! I knew it all the time.

Milagros. So did I, only I didn't want to frighten you.

Acacia. What do you think?

Milagros. Don't ask me! Don't ask!

Raimunda. [*Down-stairs.*] Holy Virgin! God save us! Terrible, terrible! Oh, his poor mother when she hears that her poor boy is dead—murdered! I can't believe it! What a terrible thing for us all!

Acacia. What does she say? Did you hear? —Mother! Mother! Mother!

Raimunda. Acacia! Daughter! Don't you come down! Don't come down! I am coming up.

[RAIMUNDA, FIDELA, ENGRACIA, *and a number of other women enter.*]

Acacia. What's the matter? What has happened? Some one is dead, isn't he? Some one is dead?

Raimunda. My poor child! Faustino! Faustino!

Acacia. What?

Raimunda. Murdered! Shot dead as he left the village!

Acacia. Mother! *Ay!* But who did it? Who did it?

Raimunda. Nobody knows. It was too dark; they couldn't see. Every one thinks it was Norbert—so as to fill the cup of disgrace which we must drain in this house!

Engracia. It couldn't have been any one else.

Women. It was Norbert! It was Norbert!

Fidela. Here come the constables.

Engracia. Have they caught him?

Raimunda. And here is your father.

[ESTEBAN *enters.*] Esteban, my soul! Who did it? Do you know?

Esteban. How do I know? I saw what the rest did. Don't leave the house, do you hear? I don't want to have you running around the village.

Raimunda. But how is his father? Think of his poor mother when they carry her boy home to her dead—murdered! And he left her alive, happy, and well only this morning!

Engracia. Hanging is too good for the wretch that did it!

Fidela. They ought to have killed him on the spot! Such a thing never happened before in this village.

Raimunda. Esteban, don't let them take the body away. I must see him—and so must my daughter. He was to have been her husband.

Esteban. Keep cool! There is plenty of time. I don't want you to leave the house, do you hear? It's in the hands of the law now; the doctor and priest were too late. I must hurry back; we all have depositions to make. [*He retires.*]

Raimunda. Your father is right. What can we do?—except commend his soul to God, who was his Maker. I can't get his poor mother out of my head! Don't take it so hard, Acacia. It frightens me to see you so still. It is worse than if you cried your heart out. Who would ever have believed this morning that such a thing could be? But it is! A curse has fallen upon us!

Engracia. The shot went straight through his heart.

Fidela. He fell off his horse, like a log.

Raimunda. What a shame, what a disgrace to the village! I blush to think that the murderer was born in this place, that he was one of us, and walked about here with all that evil in his heart! He is one of our own family, to make it worse!

Gaspara. But we aren't sure of that.

Raimunda. Who else could it be? Everybody says so.

Engracia. Everybody says it was Norbert.

Fidela. It couldn't have been any one but Norbert!

Raimunda. Light the candles, Milagros, before the image of the Virgin. Let us tell her a rosary, since we can do no more than pray for the dead.

Gaspara. God rest his soul!

Engracia. He died without confession.

Fidela. From Purgatory, good Lord, deliver us.

All. God rest his soul!

Raimunda. [*To* MILAGROS.] You begin the rosary; I cannot pray. I am thinking of his mother's broken heart!

[*The women begin to tell the rosary.*]

ACT TWO

Entrance hall of a farmhouse. There is a large door at the rear, on either side of which is a window, having an iron grating. A door on the left, and another on the right.

ESTEBAN *is seated at a small table, taking lunch.* RAIMUNDA *waits upon him, seated also.* JULIANA *comes and goes, assisting with the service.* ACACIA *sits in a low chair near one of the windows, sewing. A basket of clothes stands beside her.*

Raimunda. Don't you like it?

Esteban. Of course I do.

Raimunda. You haven't eaten anything. Do you want us to cook something else?

Esteban. Don't bother me, my dear. I have had plenty.

Raimunda. You don't expect me to believe that. [*Calling.*] Juliana! Bring the salad!—Something is the matter with you.

Esteban. Don't be silly.

Raimunda. Don't you suppose that I know you by this time? You ought never to have gone to the village. You've heard talk. We came out here to the grove to get rid of it all, to be away from the excitement, and it was a good thing, too, that we did. Now you go back to the village and don't say one word to me about it. What did you want to do that for?

Esteban. I wanted to see Norbert and his father.

Raimunda. Yes, but you could have sent for them and have had them come out here. You ought to have spared yourself; then you wouldn't have heard all this talk. I know how they are talking in the village.

Juliana. Yes, and that is all the good it does us to stay out here and shut ourselves up from everybody, because everybody that goes anywhere in the neighborhood passes through this grove, and then they stop, and smell around, and meddle in what is none of their business.

Esteban. Yes, and you meddle with every one of them.

Juliana. No, señor; don't you make any mistake. I meddle with nobody. Didn't I scold Bernabea only yesterday for talking more than she had any right to with some men from Encinar who were coming down the road? If any one asks questions send them to me, because I've learned what to do from my mother, who had good reason to know: When questioned much, answer little, and be sure you make it just the opposite.

Raimunda. Hold your tongue! And get out. [JULIANA *retires.*] What do they say in the village?

Esteban. Nothing. Tío Eusebio and his boys swear they are going to kill Norbert. They refuse to accept the decision of the court; he got off too easily. They are coming over some day, and then there will be trouble. You hear both sides in the village. Some think that Tío Eusebio is right, that it must have been Norbert; others think it wasn't Norbert. They say that the court let him go because he was innocent, and he proved it.

Raimunda. That is what I think. No one could contradict his deposition; not even Faustino's father could find any flaws in it, nor the hands. You couldn't yourself, and you were with them.

Esteban. Tío Eusebio and I had stopped to light our cigars. We were laughing like two fools because I had my lighter, and it wouldn't light; so Tío Eusebio got out his tinder and flint and said to me, laughing: "Here, get a light, and don't waste your time with that new-fangled machine. All it is good for is to help fools waste their money. I still make out with this." That was what blinded us. We were fooling over the light when the shot was fired. We started up and could see nothing. Then, when we saw that he had dropped dead, we stood stock-still, as dead as he was. They could have finished us, too, while they were about it, and we would never have known it.

[ACACIA *gets up suddenly and starts to go out.*]

Raimunda. Where are you going, my dear? Don't be nervous.

Acacia. You never talk about anything else. I don't see how you can stand it. Hasn't he told us how it happened over and over again? Do we have to hear the same thing all the time?

Esteban. She is right. If I had my way, I'd never mention it again; it's your mother.

Acacia. I even dream about it at night. I never used to be nervous when I was alone or in the dark, but now I am frightened to death, even in broad daylight.

Raimunda. You are not the only one, either. I get no rest, day nor night. I never used to be afraid. I thought nothing of passing the cemetery after dark, not even on All Soul's Eve, but now the least thing makes me jump, no matter what—noise, silence. To tell the truth, as long as we thought it was Norbert, although he was one of the family, and it would have been a shame and a disgrace to us all, at the same time it couldn't be helped; there was nothing to do but resign oneself—and I had resigned myself. After all, it had an explanation. But now, if it wasn't Norbert, if nobody knows who it was, and nobody can explain why it was that that poor boy was shot—I can't be easy in my mind. If it wasn't Norbert, who could have wished him any harm? Maybe it was revenge, some enemy of his father's, or of yours—how do we know but that the shot was intended for you, and since it was night and pitch-dark, they made a mistake, and what they didn't do then they will another time, and . . . . I can't stand this suspense! I get no rest! Every time that you go out of the house and show yourself on the road, it seems to me that I will go crazy. To-day, when you were late, I was just starting for the village myself.

Acacia. She was out on the road already.

Raimunda. Yes, only I saw you and Rubio from the top of the hill, so I turned and ran back before you passed the mill, so you wouldn't be angry. I know it is foolish, but now I want to be with you all the time, wherever you go—I can't bear to be separated from you for one moment. Otherwise I can't be happy. This isn't living.

Esteban. I don't believe anybody wishes me any harm. I never wronged any man. I go wherever I please, without so much as giving it a thought, day or night.

Raimunda. I used to feel the same; there is nobody who could wish us harm. We have helped so many. But all that you need is one enemy, one envious, evil mind. How do we know but that we have some enemy without our suspecting it? A second shot might come from the same quarter as the first. Norbert

is free because they couldn't prove that he was guilty; and I am glad of it. Why shouldn't I be glad when he is my own sister's son—my favorite sister's? I could never have believed that Norbert could have done such a thing as murder a man in the dark! But is this to be the end of it? What is the law doing now? Why don't they investigate, why doesn't some one speak? Somebody must know, somebody must have seen whoever it was that was there that day, hovering along the road. When everything is all right, everybody knows who is passing, and what is going on —who comes and who goes—you hear it all without asking; but when you want to know, then nobody knows, nobody has seen anything.

Esteban. I can't see why that is so strange. When a man is going about his business, he has nothing to conceal; but when his intentions are evil, naturally the first thing he does is to hide himself.

Raimunda. Who do you think that it was?

Esteban. I? To tell the truth, I thought it was Norbert, the same as you. If it wasn't Norbert, I don't know who it was.

Raimunda. I suppose you won't like it, but I'll tell you what I have made up my mind to do.

Esteban. What?

Raimunda. Talk to Norbert. Bernabé has gone to find him. I expect him any minute.

Acacia. Norbert? What do you want to talk to him for?

Esteban. That is what I say. What does he know about it?

Raimunda. How can I tell? But I know he won't lie to me. By the memory of his mother, I will make him tell me the truth. If he did it, he knows I will never tell. I can't stand this any longer. I shake all over.

Esteban. Do you suppose that Norbert is going to tell you if he was the one who did it?

Raimunda. After I talk to him I shall know.

Esteban. Well, have your own way. It will only make more talk and hard feeling, especially since Tío Eusebio is coming over to-day. If they meet. . . .

Raimunda. They won't meet on the road, because they come from different directions. After they are here the house is big enough. We can take care of them both.

[JULIANA *enters.*]

Juliana. Master. . . .

Esteban. Why are you always bothering me?

Juliana. Tío Eusebio is coming down the road. Maybe you don't want to see him; I thought you might like to know. . . .

Esteban. Why shouldn't I want to see him? Didn't I tell you he was coming?—Now bring in the other one!

Raimunda. Yes, he can't come too soon to please me.

Esteban. Who told you that I didn't want to see Tío Eusebio?

Juliana. Oh, don't blame it on me! It wasn't my fault. Rubio says you don't want to see him because he is mad at you. You didn't side with him in court, and that's the reason that Norbert went free.

Esteban. I'll teach Rubio it's none of his business whom I side with.

Juliana. Yes, and there are other things you might teach him while you are about it. Have I nothing to do but wait on that man? God help me, he has had more to drink to-day than is good for him. And that isn't talk, either.

Raimunda. This is the last straw! Where is he?

Esteban. No, leave him to me.

Raimunda. Everything goes wrong in this house. Everybody takes advantage of you as soon as anything is the matter. You don't need to turn your back—it's instinct. They know when you can't take care of yourself.

Juliana. I'll not take that from you, Raimunda, if you mean me.

Raimunda. You know who I mean. Take it any way you like.

Juliana. Señor, señor! What curse has fallen on this house? We are all poisoned, snared, our feet are caught in some evil vine; we are changed. One takes it out on the other, and everybody is against me. God help me, I say, and give me the strength to endure it!

Raimunda. Yes, and give me the strength to endure you.

Juliana. Yes, me! It is all my fault.

Raimunda. Look at me, will you? Do I have to tell you to your face to get out? That's all I want from you.

Juliana. Yes, you want me to shut up like a tomb. Well, I'll shut up, God help me! Señor! Let me out! Don't talk to me! [*Goes out.*]

Esteban. Here comes Tío Eusebio.

Acacia. I am going. He breaks down and cries whenever he sees me. He doesn't know what he is doing, but it's always the wrong thing. Does he think he is the only one who has lost anything?

Raimunda. I am sure I have cried as much as his mother has. Tío Eusebio is not the same man; he forgets. But never mind. You are right not to see him.

Acacia. I have finished the shirts, mother. I'll iron them as soon as I have time.

Esteban. Were you sewing for me?

Acacia. You can see for yourself.

Raimunda. I don't know how we'd get on if she didn't sew. I am not good for anything. I don't know whether I am alive or dead, God help me! But she can work. She gets through with it somehow. [*She caresses* Acacia *affectionately as she passes out.*] God bless you, Acacia, my child! [Acacia *goes out.*] It is a terrible responsibility to be a mother. For a long time I was afraid that she was going to get married and leave me. Now, what wouldn't I give to see her married?

[Tío Eusebio *enters.*]

Eusebio. Hello! Where is everybody?

Esteban. Come in, Tío Eusebio.

Eusebio. Good morning to both.

Raimunda. Good morning, Tío Eusebio.

Esteban. Where are your horses? I'll have them put up.

Eusebio. My man will tend to that.

Esteban. Sit down. Come, a glass of that wine he likes so much, Raimunda.

Eusebio. No, no, thank you. I am not feeling well. Wine doesn't agree with me.

Esteban. This wine will do you good. It's a tonic.

Raimunda. Suit yourself. How are you, Tío Eusebio? How is Julia?

Eusebio. Julia? What do you expect? I am going to lose her just as I did the boy; I can see it.

Raimunda. God forbid! Hasn't she four sons yet to live for?

Eusebio. Yes, the more worry! That is what is killing her—worry. Nobody knows what will happen next. Our hearts are broken. We were sure that we would get justice; but now we are bitter. Everybody said it would be like this, but we didn't believe it. The murderer is alive—you pass him on the street; he goes home to his house, shuts the door, and laughs at us. It only proves what I knew all the time. There is no such thing in this world as justice, unless a man takes it with his own hands, which is what they will drive us to do now. That is why I wanted to see you yesterday. If my boys come into the village, send them home. Don't let them stay around. Arrest them—anything rather than another tragedy in our house; although I don't want to see his murderer go free—the murderer of my boy—unless God avenges him, as he must, by God!—or else there is no justice in heaven.

Raimunda. Don't turn against God, Tío Eusebio. Though the hand of justice never fall upon him after the foul murder he has done, yet there is not one of us that would be in his place. He is alone with his conscience. I would not have what he has on his soul upon mine, for all the blessings of this world. We have lived good lives, we have done evil to no man, yet all our days are purgatory and torment. He must have hell in his heart after what he has done—of that we can be sure—as sure as of the day of our death.

Eusebio. That is cold comfort to me. How does it help me prevent my boys from taking the law into their own hands? Justice has not been done—and it should have been done. Now they are the ones who will go to jail for it! They will make good their threats too. You ought to hear them. Even the little fellow, who is only twelve, doubles up his fists like a man, and swears that whoever killed his brother will have to reckon with him, come what may. I sit there and cry like a child. I needn't tell you how his mother feels. And all the while I have it in my heart to say: Go, my sons! Stone him until he is dead! Cut him to pieces like a hound! Drag his carcass home to me through the mire—what offal there is left of it! Instead I swallow it all and look grave, and tell them that it is wrong even to think of such a thing—it would kill their mother, it would ruin all of us!

Raimunda. You are unreasonable, Tío Eusebio. Norbert is innocent; the law says so. No one could bring the least proof against him; he proved where he was, and what he was doing all that day, one hour after the other. He and his men were up at Los Berrocales. Don Faustino, the doctor, saw him there and talked with him at the very hour it took place, and he is from Eñcinar. You know yourself no man can be in two places at the same time. You might think that his

own people had been told to say what they did, although it isn't an easy thing for so many to agree on a lie; but Don Faustino is a friend of yours; he is in your debt. And others who would naturally have been on your side said the same. Only one shepherd from Los Berrocales would testify that he had seen a man at that hour, and that was a great way off; but he had no idea who it was. From his clothes and the way that he carried himself he was sure that it could not have been Norbert.

Eusebio. If it wasn't, I say nothing. Does it make it any better for us that he hired some one else to do it? There can't be any doubt; there is no other explanation. I have no enemies who would do such a thing. I never harmed any man; I help every one, whether they are our own people or not. I make it easy. If I were to sue for one-half the damage that is done me every day, it would take all of my time. I will die a poor man. They killed Faustino because he was going to marry Acacia. That is all there is to it. Nobody could have had any such reason but Norbert. If everybody had told what they knew, the trial would have ended right there. But the ones who knew most said the least; they said nothing.

Raimunda. Do you mean us?

Eusebio. I don't say who I mean.

Raimunda. It is plain enough; you don't have to mention names nor point your finger. Do you mean to say that we keep quiet because Norbert is one of our family?

Eusebio. Do you mean to say that Acacia doesn't know more about this thing than she is willing to admit?

Raimunda. No, sir, she knows no more about it than you do. You have made up your mind that it was Norbert because you want to make yourself believe that nobody else has anything against you. We are none of us saints, Tío Eusebio. You may have done a great deal of good in your time, but you must also have done some evil; you think that nobody remembers, but maybe the ones who have suffered don't think the same. If Norbert had been in love with my daughter to that extent, he would have shown it before now. Your son didn't take her away from him, remember that. Faustino never said one word until after she was done with Norbert, and she turned him off because she knew he was going with another girl. He never so much as took the trouble to excuse himself, so that when you come down to it, he was the one who left her. That is no reason why any one should commit murder. You can see it yourself.

Eusebio. Then why did everybody say that it couldn't have been any one else? You said so yourself; everybody said so.

Raimunda. Yes, because at first he was the only one we could think of. But when you look at it calmly, it is foolish to say that he is the only one who could have done it. You insinuate that we have something to conceal. Once for all, let me tell you, we are more anxious than you are to have the truth known, to have this thing out and be done with it. You have lost a son, but I have a daughter who is alive, and she has nothing to gain, either, by this mystery.

Eusebio. No, she hasn't. Much less when she keeps her mouth shut. And you haven't anything to gain. You don't know what Norbert and his father say about this house so as to divert suspicion from themselves? If I believed what they said. . . .

Raimunda. About us? What do they say? [*To* ESTEBAN.] You have been in the village. What do they say?

Esteban. Nobody cares what they say.

Eusebio. No, I don't believe one word that comes from them. I am only telling you how they repay the kindness you do them by taking their part.

Raimunda. So you are on that tack again? Tío Eusebio, I have to stop and force myself to think what it must mean to lose a child, or I would lose control of myself. I am a mother, God knows, yet you come here and insult my daughter. You insult all of us.

Esteban. Wife! Enough of this. What is the use? Tío Eusebio. . . .

Eusebio. I insult nobody. I only repeat what other people say. You suppress the truth because he is one of the family. The whole village is the same. What you are afraid of is the disgrace. People here may think that it was not Norbert, but in Encinar, let me tell you, they think that it was. If justice isn't done—and done quick—blood will be spilled between these villages, and nobody can stop it, either. You know what young blood is.

Raimunda. Yes, and you are the one who stirs it up. You respect neither God nor man.

Why, didn't you just admit that Norbert couldn't have done it unless he had hired some one to commit the murder? Nonsense! It isn't so easy to hire a man to commit murder. What had a boy like Norbert to give, anyway?—Unless you want us to believe that his father had a hand in it.

Eusebio. Bah! Rogues come cheap. How about the Valderrobles? They live here. Didn't they kill two goatherds for three and a half duros?

Raimunda. How long was it before they were found out? They fought over the half duro. When you hire a man to do a deed like that, you put yourself in his power; you become his slave for the rest of your life. There may be people who can afford to do such things, but they must be rich, they must have power. Not a boy like Norbert!

Eusebio. Every family has a faithful servant who will do what he is told.

Raimunda. No doubt yours has. No doubt you have had occasion to use him too; you know so much about it.

Eusebio. Take care what you say!

Raimunda. Take care yourself!

Esteban. Raimunda! Enough of this. What is the use of all this talk?

Eusebio. Well, you hear what she says. How about you?

Esteban. If we dwell on this forever, we shall all of us go mad.

Eusebio. Yes. You heard what I said.

Raimunda. If you mean by that you don't intend to let this matter drop until you have found the murderer of your boy, it is only right and proper, and I respect you for it. But that is no reason why you should come here and insult us. Once for all, you may want justice, but I want it more than you do. I pray to God for it every day, I pray him on my knees not to let the murderer go free—and I should pray to him just the same if I had a boy—if it had been my own boy that did it! [Rubio *appears in the doorway.*]

Rubio. How about me, master?

Esteban. Well, Rubio?

Rubio. Don't look at me like that; I'm not drunk. We started out before lunch, that was all. I had an invitation and took a drop; it went against me. I'm sorry you feel that way about it.

Raimunda. What is the matter with him? Juliana was right.

Rubio. Tell Juliana to mind her business, will you? I just wanted to tell the master.

Esteban. Rubio! You can tell me later whatever you like. Tío Eusebio is here. Don't you see? We are busy.

Rubio. Tío Eusebio? So he is. What does he want?

Raimunda. Is it any of your business what he wants? Get out! Go along and sleep it off. You don't know what you are talking about.

Rubio. I know, señora. Don't say that to me.

Esteban. Rubio!

Rubio. Juliana's a fool; I don't drink. It was my money, anyhow. I'm no thief. What I have is my own; and my wife is my own, too. She owes nobody anything, eh, master?

Esteban. Rubio! Go along! Get to bed, and don't show yourself again until you have had a good sleep. What is the matter with you? What will Tío Eusebio think?

Rubio. I don't know. I don't take anything, understand—from anybody. [*Goes out.*]

Raimunda. What was it that you were just saying about servants, Tío Eusebio? This man has us with our hearts in our throats, yet he is nothing to us. Suppose we had trusted him with some secret? What is the matter with Rubio, anyway? Is he going to get drunk every day? He was never like this before. You ought not to put up with it.

Esteban. Don't you see? He isn't used to it. That is the reason he is upset by a thimbleful. Somebody invited him into the tavern while I was tending to my business. I gave him a piece of my mind and sent him to bed, but he hasn't slept it off yet. He is drunk. That is all there is to it.

Eusebio. Perfectly natural. Is that all?

Esteban. Drop in again, Tío Eusebio.

Eusebio. Thanks. I am sorry this happened—after I took the trouble to come.

Raimunda. Nonsense! Nothing has happened. We have no hard feeling.

Eusebio. No, and I hope you won't have any. Remember what I've been through. My heart is broken—it's not scratched. It won't heal either until God claims another one of his own. How long do you expect to stay in the grove?

Esteban. Till Sunday. We have nothing to keep us. We only wanted to be out of the village. Now that Norbert is home, it is nothing but talk, talk, talk.

Eusebio. That's right—nothing but talk.

If you see my boys around, look out! I don't want them to get into any trouble, which afterward we might have cause to regret.

Esteban. Don't you worry. They won't get into any while I am around. Blame it on me if they do.

Eusebio. They're working down by the river now. They'll be all right unless somebody happens along and stirs them up. God be with you, I say. Adios! Where is Acacia?

Raimunda. I told her not to come down, so as to spare your feelings. It is hard on her, too; it brings back everything.

Eusebio. That's so. It must.

Esteban. I'll send for your horses.

Eusebio. No, I can call myself.—Francisco! —Here he comes. Take care of yourselves. God be with you!

[*They move toward the door.*]

Raimunda. God be with you, Tío Eusebio. Tell Julia not to worry. I think of her every day. I have prayed more for her than I have for the boy—God has forgiven him by this time. Surely he never did anything to deserve such a bad end! My heart bleeds for him.

[Esteban *and* Tío Eusebio *have passed out while she is speaking.* Bernabé *enters.*]

Bernabé. Señora!

Raimunda. Is Norbert here? Could you find him?

Bernabé. Yes, I brought him along so as to save time. He wanted to see you himself.

Raimunda. Didn't you meet Tío Eusebio?

Bernabé. No, we saw him coming up from the river when we were a long way off, so we turned and went in by the great corral. Norbert is hiding there until Tío Eusebio starts back to Encinar.

Raimunda. There he goes up the road now.

Bernabé. Yes—under the great cross.

Raimunda. Tell Norbert. No—wait! What do they say in the village?

Bernabé. No good, señora. The law is going to have its hands full before it gets to the bottom of this.

Raimunda. Does anybody think it was Norbert?

Bernabé. You would get your head broke if you said it was. When he came back yesterday, half the town was out to meet him. Everybody was sitting by the roadside. They took him up on their shoulders and carried him home. The women all cried, and the men hugged him. I thought his father would die for joy.

Raimunda. He never did it. Poor Norbert!

Bernabé. They say the men are coming over from Encinar to kill him; everybody here carries a club and goes armed.

Raimunda. Mother of God! Did anything go wrong with the master while he was in the village this morning? What did you hear?

Bernabé. So they have been talking to you?

Raimunda. No. That is—yes; I know.

Bernabé. Rubio was in the tavern and began to say things, so I ran for the master, and he came and ordered him out. He was insolent to the master. He was drunk.

Raimunda. Do you remember what he said? I mean Rubio.

Bernabé. Oh! His tongue ran away with him. He was drunk. Do you know what I think? If I were you, I wouldn't go back to the village for two or three days.

Raimunda. No, certainly not. If I had my way we would never go back. I am filled with a loathing for it all so great that I want to rush out, and down that long road, and then on and up over those mountains to the other side, and after that I don't know where I would hide myself. I feel as if some one were running after me, after me, always after me, with more than death in his heart. But the master. . . . Where is the master?

Bernabé. Seeing to Rubio.

Raimunda. Tell Norbert to come in. I can't wait.

[Bernabé *goes out.* Norbert *enters.*]

Norbert. Aunt Raimunda!

Raimunda. Norbert, my boy! Give me a hug.

Norbert. I am so glad you sent for me. I've been treated like a dog. It's a good thing that my mother is dead and in heaven. I am glad she never lived to see this day. Next to my father, there is nobody in the world I think so much of as I do of you.

Raimunda. I could never have believed that you did it—not though everybody said so.

Norbert. I know it; you were the first to take my part. Where is Acacia?

Raimunda. In her room. We have our fill of trouble in this house.

Norbert. Who says I killed Faustino? If I hadn't proved, as I did prove, where I was all that day, if I'd done as I meant at first and taken my gun and gone off to hunt alone

by myself, and then couldn't have proved where I was, because nobody had seen me, I would have spent the rest of my life in prison. They would have had me.

Raimunda. Are you crying?

Norbert. No, I am not crying; but I cried when I found myself in that prison. If anybody had ever told me that I would ever go to prison, I would never have believed it; I'd have laughed in his face. But that isn't the worst. Tío Eusebio and his boys have sworn to kill me. They will never believe that I am innocent; they know I murdered Faustino. They are as sure of it as I am that my mother lies under the ground!

Raimunda. Because nobody knows who did it. Nobody can find out anything. Don't you see? They will never rest at that. Do you suspect any one?

Norbert. I more than suspect.

Raimunda. Then why didn't you say so? You were in court. You had the opportunity.

Norbert. If I hadn't cleared myself I would have told. But what was the use? I am a dead man now if I speak. They will do the same thing to me.

Raimunda. Eh? Will they? What do you mean? Was it revenge? But who did it? Tell me what you think. I must know, because Tío Eusebio and Esteban have always had the same friends; they have always stood together, for better or for worse, whichever it was. Their enemies would naturally be the same. No, I can get no rest. This vengeance was intended for us just as much as it was for Tío Eusebio; it was to prevent a closer union of our families. Maybe they won't stop at that, either. Some day they will do the same to my husband!

Norbert. I wouldn't worry about Uncle Esteban.

Raimunda. Why, what do you mean? Do you think? . . .

Norbert. I don't think.

Raimunda. Then tell me what you know. Somehow I believe you are not the only one who knows it. You think what the rest think —it must be the same—what everybody knows.

Norbert. Well, they didn't get it out of me; that is one thing you can be sure of. Besides, how could they know? It's gossip, that's all —not worth that! Talk in the village! They will never get it out of me.

Raimunda. Norbert, by the soul of your sainted mother in heaven, tell me what it is!

Norbert. For God's sake, I can't talk! I was afraid to open my mouth in court. Now, if I say a word, I am a dead man. A dead man!

Raimunda. But who would kill you?

Norbert. Who killed Faustino?

Raimunda. But who did kill Faustino? Some one was paid to do it, is that it? Rubio said something in the wine-shop this morning.

Norbert. Who told you?

Raimunda. Esteban went in and dragged him out; it was the only way he could stop him.

Norbert. He didn't want to be compromised.

Raimunda. What is that? He didn't want to be compromised? Was Rubio saying that he. . . .

Norbert. That he was the real master of this house.

Raimunda. The master of this house? Because it was Rubio. . . .

Norbert. Rubio.

Raimunda. Who killed Faustino?

Norbert. Sí, señora.

Raimunda. Rubio! I knew it all the time. But does anybody else know? That is the question. Do they know it in the village?

Norbert. He gives himself away; he has money—bills, bank-notes—wherever he goes. He turned on them this morning while they were singing that song. That was why they had to call Uncle Esteban, and he kicked him out of the wine-shop.

Raimunda. That song? Oh, yes! That song—I remember. It goes. . . . How does it go?

Norbert.

"Who loves the maid that dwells by the Mill
Shall love in evil hour;
Because she loves with the love that she loves,
Call her the Passion Flower."

Raimunda. We are the ones who dwell by the Mill; that is what they call us. It is here—our house. And the maid that dwells by the Mill must be Acacia, my daughter. This song that everybody sings. . . . They call her the Passion Flower? That is it, isn't it? But who loves her in an evil way? How could anybody love her? You loved her, Faustino loved her; but who else ever

loved her? Why do they call her the Passion Flower? Look me in the eye! Why did you give her up if you really loved her? Why? I want you to tell me; you have got to tell me. You cannot tell me anything worse than what I already know.

Norbert. Do you want them to kill me? To ruin all of us? I have never said one word—not even when they had me in prison would I say one word! I don't know how it got out—Rubio told, or my father. He is the only one who ever had it from me. He wanted to put the law on them, but I said no. They would have killed him; they would have killed me!

Raimunda. Stop! Don't you talk! I see it now. I see it all. The Passion Flower! *La Malquerida*! Come here to me! Tell me everything. Before they kill you, by God, they will have to kill me! It cannot go on like this. Somebody must pay for it. Tío Eusebio and his boys will never rest till they have justice. If they can't get it in any other way, they will take it out of you—revenge! You can't escape. Faustino was murdered so as to prevent him from marrying Acacia. You left her for the same reason—for fear that they would kill you. Was that it? Tell me the truth!

Norbert. They told me to leave her because she was promised to Faustino; she had been for a long time. They said they had an understanding with Tío Eusebio, and if I didn't make the best of it, then I could take the worst of it. But if I ever opened my mouth.

Raimunda. They would kill you? Was that it? But you. . . .

Norbert. I believed it—I was afraid—I didn't know what to do. Then I began to run after another girl, who was nothing to me, so as to break off with Acacia. Afterward, when I found out that not a word of it was true, that neither Tío Eusebio nor Faustino had ever spoken to Uncle Esteban. . . . Then, when they killed Faustino I knew why they killed him. It was because he dared lay eyes on Acacia. There was nothing they could tell him. They couldn't scare him off. Tío Eusebio wasn't a man to stand by and see his son refused. They couldn't refuse, so they agreed to it, and went through with it until the end came, and they killed him. They killed him because I was here to take the blame. Who else could have done it? Of course it was I! I loved Acacia—I was jealous. That was the plot. Praise God, some saint surely watched over me that day! But now the crime has come home to him. It lies like lead on his conscience. He betrays himself. . . .

Raimunda. Is it possible that such a thing could be? I must have been blind not to see. What veil hung over my eyes? Why, it is all as clear as day! How could I have been so blind?

Norbert. What are you doing?

Raimunda. I don't know—I don't know where I am—something so awful, so vast is passing through my mind that it seems as if it were nothing. I can only remember one thing of all that you have told me—that song—*La Malquerida!* The Passion Flower! I want you to teach me the music. We can sing it together, and dance—dance and drop dead!—Acacia! Acacia! Acacia!

Norbert. No, don't you call her! Don't take it like this! It wasn't her fault!

[Acacia *enters.*]

Acacia. Did you call, mother?—Norbert!

Raimunda. Come here! Look at me—straight in the eye.

Acacia. What is the matter with you, mother?

Raimunda. No, it was not your fault.

Acacia. But what have they been doing? What did you tell her?

Raimunda. What every one else knows already—*La Malquerida!* The Passion Flower! Your honor is a scorn and a byword. It is bandied about in men's mouths!

Acacia. My honor? Never! No one can say that.

Raimunda. Don't you deny it! Tell me what you know. Why was it that you never called him father? Why was it?

Acacia. Because a child has only one father, you know that. This man could never be my father. I hated, I despised him from the day that he entered this house, and brought hell along after him!

Raimunda. Well, you are going to call him now, and you are going to call him what I tell you; you are going to call him father. Do you hear? Your father! I tell you to call your father.

Acacia. Do you want me to go to the cemetery and call him? If that isn't what you want, I have no father. This man—this man is your husband; you love him, but all that he is to me is this man! This man!

That is all he can ever be! Leave me alone if you know what is good for you—you think you are so smart. Let the law take its course. I don't care. If he has sinned, he can pay for it.

Raimunda. Do you mean for Faustino's murder? Yes—go on! Go on! What else? Out with it!

Acacia. No, mother, no! For if I had consented, Faustino would never have been murdered! Do you think I don't know how to guard my honor?

Raimunda. Then what have you been so silent about? Why didn't you come to me?

Acacia. Would you have taken my word against this man, when you were mad for him? And you must have been mad not to see! He would eat me up with his eyes while you sat there; he followed me around the house like a cat. What more do you want? I hated him so, I had such a horror of him that I prayed to God that he would make himself even more of a beast than he was, so that it would open your eyes, if anything could have opened your eyes, and let you see what manner of man he was who had robbed me of your love, for you have loved him, you have loved him so much—more than you ever loved my father!

Raimunda. No! That isn't true!

Acacia. I wanted you to hate him as I hate him, as my father in heaven hates him! I have heard his voice from the skies.

Raimunda. Silence! For shame! Come here to your mother. You are all that I have left in the world. And thank God that I can still protect you! [BERNABÉ *enters.*]

Bernabé. Señora! Señora!

Raimunda. What brings you running in such a hurry? No good, we may be sure.

Bernabé. Don't let Norbert leave the house! Don't let him out of your sight!

Raimunda. How?

Bernabé. Tío Eusebio's boys are waiting outside with their men to kill him.

Norbert. What did I tell you? You wouldn't believe it. They are here—they want to kill me! And they will kill me. Yes, they will!

Raimunda. Not unless they kill us all first! Somebody has sent for them.

Bernabé. Yes, Rubio. I saw him running along the river bank where Tío Eusebio's boys were at work.

Norbert. Didn't I tell you? They want to kill me, so as to save themselves. Then nothing will ever come out. Tío Eusebio's boys will think they have the man who murdered their brother. They will kill me, Aunt Raimunda! Yes, they will! They are too many for one; I can't defend myself. I haven't even a knife. I don't dare to carry a gun—I might kill some one. I'd rather die than be locked up in that cell again. Save me, Aunt Raimunda! I don't want to die. It wasn't my fault! They hunt me like a wolf.

Raimunda. Don't be afraid. If they kill you, it will be over my dead body. Go in there with Bernabé and take that gun, do you hear? They won't dare to come in. If they do, shoot to kill! When I call, shoot—no matter who it may be! Do you understand? No matter who it may be! Don't shut the door. [*To* ACACIA.] You stand here by me. Esteban! Esteban! Esteban!

Acacia. What are you going to do?

[ESTEBAN *enters.*]

Esteban. Did you call?

Raimunda. Yes, I want to speak to you. Norbert is here in our house. Tío Eusebio's boys are waiting outside. You sent for them to kill him—because you are not man enough to do it yourself.

Esteban. [*Making a movement to draw a weapon.*] Raimunda!

Acacia. Mother!

Raimunda. No, don't you do it! Call Rubio and let him make an end of us all! He will have to make an end of us all to cover your guilt. Murderer! Assassin!

Esteban. You are crazy!

Raimunda. I was crazy! I was crazy the day that you first entered this house—my house—like a thief, to rob me of all I held dear!

Esteban. What are you talking about?

Raimunda. I am not talking; other people are talking. Soon the law will speak. If you don't want that, do as I tell you, or I will cry out—I will rouse the house. You brought them here—take them away again, you cowards that lie in wait for innocent men, to stab them in the back! Norbert leaves this house, but he leaves with me. If they kill him, they kill me. I am here to protect him, and I will protect my daughter—I, alone, against you, against all the assassins you can hire! Go! Here come my people. . . . Don't you touch me! Hide yourself in the uttermost recesses of those mountains, in caves where the wild beasts dwell. Now I know! You

have nothing to hope for from me. Oh, I was alone with my child!—and you came. You knew that she was my child; there she stands—*La Malquerida!* The Passion Flower! Well! I am still here to guard her from you, to tell you that her father still lives in heaven —and to shoot you through the heart if you make one step to lay your hand on her!

ACT THREE

The scene is the same as in the Second Act. RAIMUNDA *stands at the door, peering anxiously out over the countryside. After a moment* JULIANA *enters.*

Juliana. Raimunda!

Raimunda. What do you want? Is he worse?

Juliana. No, don't be nervous.

Raimunda. How is he? Why did you leave him?

Juliana. He's asleep. Acacia is with him; she can hear if he calls. You are the one I am worried about. Thank God, he's not dead. Do you expect to go all day without eating?

Raimunda. Let me alone; don't bother me.

Juliana. What are you doing out here? Come on in and sit with us.

Raimunda. I was looking for Bernabé.

Juliana. He can't be back so soon if he brings the men to take Norbert away. If the constables come with him. . . .

Raimunda. Constables? Constables in this house? Ah, Juliana, surely a curse has fallen upon us all!

Juliana. Come on in, and don't be looking out of the door all the time. It's not Bernabé that you are looking for; it's the other one—it's your husband. When all is said and done, he is your husband.

Raimunda. Yes, the habits of a lifetime cannot be changed in one day. Although I know what I know, and that it must always be so, although if I saw him coming it would be to curse him, although I must loathe him for the rest of my life, yet here I stand looking out of the door and scanning every rock and cranny upon those mountains only for a sight of him! It seems to me as if I were waiting for him as I used to do, to see him come happy and smiling, and then turn and walk into the house with him arm in arm like two lovers, and sit down here at the table to eat, and go over everything that we had done during the day. Sometimes we would laugh, sometimes we would argue, but always it was so dear, as if we had been fonder of each other than any one else who had ever lived in the world. Now it is all over; nothing remains. The peace of God has fled forever from this house!

Juliana. You cannot believe what you see with your eyes. If you hadn't told me yourself, if I didn't know how you felt, how you were, I would never have believed it. Faustino is dead, God help him; we can leave it. There might be more of the sort, too, for all I care; but this devil that has gotten into him with Acacia, it doesn't seem possible, I can't believe it—although I must believe it. There is no other explanation of the mystery.

Raimunda. Did you ever notice anything?

Juliana. Nothing. When he first came to the house, it was to make love to you, and I needn't tell you how I felt. I was fond of your first husband; there never was a better nor juster man in the world, so I looked on him with disfavor. God have mercy on me, but if I had seen anything, what reason would I have had for keeping quiet? Of course, when you come to think, he gave her presents —and there were a good many of them, too —but we never thought anything of that. She was so haughty with him. They never had one good talk together from the day you were married. She was only a runt then anyway. She insulted him out of pure spite. Nobody could do anything with her. If you struck her, it made no difference. I'll say this while I am about it: if she had been nice to him when she was little, he might have looked on her as his own daughter. Then we would never have been where we are now.

Raimunda. Are you trying to excuse him?

Juliana. Excuse him? There can be no excuse for such a thing. It was enough that she was your daughter. What I say is that the girl was like a stranger to him from the beginning, although she was your own child. If she had treated him like a father, as she ought—it would have been different; he isn't a bad man. A bad man is bad through and through. When you were first married, I've seem him sit by himself and cry at the way the girl ran from him, as if he had had the plague.

Raimunda. You are right. The only trouble we ever had was with the child.

Juliana. After she was grown there wasn't

a girl in the village that was her equal for looks. Nobody knows that better than you do. But she shrank from him as if he had been the devil. There she was all the time —right before his eyes! No wonder if he had an evil thought; none of us are above them.

Raimunda. I don't say he might not have had an evil thought, although he ought never to have had such a thought. But you put an evil thought out of your mind unless you are evil. He must have had more than an evil thought to do what he did, to murder a man in cold blood to prevent my daughter from marrying and going away—away from him; his mind must have been evil, like the criminal's, waiting to break out, with all the evil of the world in his heart. I am more anxious than anybody to believe that it is not so bad, but the more I think, the more I see that there can be no excuse for it. When I remember what has been hanging over my daughter all these years, that any moment—because a man who will do murder will do anything. If he had ever laid hands on her I would have killed them both, as sure as my name is Raimunda—him, because he had been guilty of such a crime, and her because she did not let him kill her before she would consent to it. [BERNABÉ *enters.*]

Juliana. Here comes Bernabé.

Raimunda. Are you alone?

Bernabé. Yes, they are deciding in the village what is best to be done. I was afraid to stay any longer.

Raimunda. You were right. This is not life. What do they say now?

Bernabé. Do you want to go mad? Forget it. Pay no attention to what they say.

Raimunda. Are they coming to take Norbert away?

Bernabé. His father will tend to that. The doctor won't let them put him in the cart for fear it will make him worse. He'll have to be carried on a stretcher. The judge and the prosecutor are coming to take his story, so they don't want a relapse. He was unconscious yesterday and couldn't testify. Everybody has his own idea; no two agree. Not a soul went to the fields to-day. The men stand around the streets in groups; the women talk in the houses and run to and fro. Nobody stops to eat. Not a meal has been served to-day, dinner or supper either, on the hour.

Raimunda. Didn't you tell them that Norbert's wounds aren't serious?

Bernabé. What difference does that make? Now they can't do anything. Yesterday, when they thought Tío Eusebio's boys had fallen on him with the master, and he was going to die, the thing was simple; but to-day they hear he is better. How do they know but that he will soon be well again? Even Norbert's best friends say that it's a great pity that the wound wasn't serious. If he was wounded at all, it might better have been serious. Then Tío Eusebio's boys could have been made to pay for it, and they would have had their revenge, but now, if he gets well, the law will get into it, and then nobody will be satisfied.

Juliana. They are so fond of Norbert, are they, that they wish he was dead? The idiots!

Bernabé. That is the way they are. I told them they could thank you for it, because you were the one who called the master, and the master threw himself between them and knocked up their guns, so they couldn't kill him.

Raimunda. Did you tell them that?

Bernabé. Every mother's son that asked me. I said the first because it was true, and I said the rest—because you don't know what they are saying in the village, nor how they feel about what is going on in this house.

Raimunda. No! I don't want to hear! Where is the master? Have you seen him? Do you know where he is?

Bernabé. He and Rubio were up at Los Berrocales this morning with the goatherds from Encinar. They spent the night in a hut on the uplands. I don't like this going away. It's not right, if I know what is good for him. It looks as if he was afraid. This is no time to have people think what isn't so. Norbert's father talks too much. This morning he tried to persuade Tío Eusebio that his sons had no cause to shoot his boy.

Raimunda. Is Tío Eusebio in the village?

Bernabé. He came with his boys. They arrested them this morning, tied them together by the elbows, and brought them over from Encinar. Their father followed on foot and brought the little fellow with him, holding his hand all the way. They cried with every step that they took. There wasn't a man in the village but cried, too, when he saw them, even the strongest, no matter if he had never cried before.

Raimunda. And his mother is alone at

home, and here I am! What do you men know? [ACACIA *enters.*]

Acacia. Mother——

Raimunda. Well? What is it?

Acacia. Norbert wants you. He is awake now. He wants some water. He is thirsty; I was afraid to give him any for fear it wasn't right.

Raimunda. The doctor says he can have all the orange-juice he can drink. Here's the jar. Does he suffer much?

Acacia. No, not now.

Raimunda. [*To* BERNABÉ.] Did you get the things for the doctor?

Bernabé. Yes, they're in the saddle-bags. I'll bring them in. [*Goes out.*]

Acacia. He is calling, mother. Do you hear?

Raimunda. Coming, Norbert, my boy. [*Goes out.*]

Acacia. Has that man come back?

Juliana. No. He took his gun and rushed out like one mad as soon as it was over. Rubio ran after him.

Acacia. Have they caught him?

Juliana. You'll hear soon enough when they do. They'll have to bring charges against him first.

Acacia. But doesn't everybody know? They heard what my mother said.

Juliana. No, nobody heard except me and Bernabé, and he won't tell what isn't good for him; he is honest and loyal to this house. They heard your mother shout, that was all. They thought it was because Norbert was here, and Tío Eusebio's boys were waiting outside to kill him. Nobody will say a word when the judge comes unless your mother tells us to open our mouths.

Acacia. Do you mean that my mother isn't going to let you tell the truth? Won't she tell what she knows?

Juliana. Is that what you want? So you want to disgrace this house, do you, and yourself? Then every man will think what he likes; some will believe that you are innocent, and some will never believe it. A woman's honor is not a thing to be bandied about in men's mouths, not when it is none of their business.

Acacia. My honor? I can take care of my honor. Let the others do the same. Now I shan't marry. I am glad it happened, because I shall never marry. I only agreed to it to get rid of him.

Juliana. Acacia, I don't want to hear you —not another word. Surely the devil must be in you!

Acacia. Yes, he is, and he has always been, since I first learned to hate that man!

Juliana. Yes, and who is to say that wasn't where the trouble began? You had no cause to hate him. Mind you, nobody blamed your mother more than I did when she married again; but all the same, I saw what a devil you were to this man when you were a little child, and how much it meant to him—which you were too young to know.

Acacia. How much did it mean to me to see my mother always hanging around his neck? Do you suppose I liked it, sitting here and seeing her love him? I was always in the way.

Juliana. You have no right to talk like that. You were always first with your mother, and you might have been with him.

Acacia. Might have been? Never! Because I was, and I am.

Juliana. But not like you mean, though you seem proud of it; in the way you should have been. He never would have loved you as he did if you had loved him as a daughter.

Acacia. How could I love him? Didn't he turn me even against my own mother?

Juliana. What do you mean? Turn you against your own mother?

Acacia. Yes. Do you suppose I can love her now as I ought, as I should have loved her if that man had never entered this house? I remember once when I was a little girl, I spent all one night with a knife under my pillow, and I lay awake all night. The only thought that I had in my mind that night was to kill him.

Juliana. Jesús, my child! What is that? Suppose you had? Suppose you had gotten up, and had dared, and had killed him?

Acacia. I don't know who I might have killed next.

Juliana. Holy Virgin! *Jesús!* Not another word. Don't you talk! You are beyond the pale of God's mercy. Do you know what I think? It was all your fault.

Acacia. All my fault?

Juliana. Yes, yours! It was your fault! And I'll go further: if you hated him as much as you say you do, then he would have been the only one you would have hated—yes, the only one! *Jesús!* It's a good thing that your mother doesn't know!

Acacia. Know what?

Juliana. That he wasn't the one you were jealous of. It was her! You were in love with him and you didn't know it.

Acacia. In love with him?

Juliana. Yes, hate turned to love. Nobody can hate like that. A hate like that always grows out of a great love.

Acacia. Do you mean to say that I was in love with that man? Do you know what you are telling me?

Juliana. I am not telling you anything.

Acacia. No. What you will do now is run and tell my mother.

Juliana. Is that what you are afraid of? I thought so. Now you are the one who is telling. You needn't worry, though. I'll not tell. She has enough on her mind, poor soul. God help us! [BERNABÉ *enters.*]

Bernabé. Here comes the master!

Juliana. Did you see him?

Bernabé. Yes. You wouldn't know him. He looks as if he had stepped from the grave.

Acacia. Let me out!

Juliana. Yes, let us all out—and shut your mouth, do you hear? What is done is done. Your mother must never know.

[*The women go out.*]

[ESTEBAN *and* RUBIO *enter, their guns over their shoulders.*]

Bernabé. Can—can I do anything?

Esteban. Nothing, Bernabé.

Bernabé. I'll tell the mistress.

Esteban. No, don't tell her; they'll find us.

Rubio. How about his wounds, eh?

Bernabé. Better. The doctor sent for these things. I'll take them in—unless you need me. [*Goes out.*]

Esteban. Here I am. What do you want me to do?

Rubio. What do I want you to do? This is your house; you belong here. A man's house is his castle. Running away, being afraid to face it, is to confess. It will ruin us both.

Esteban. Here I am; you have had your way. Now this woman will come and accuse me and raise the house. The judge will be here, and he will bring Tío Eusebio. What then?

Rubio. Why didn't you let Tío Eusebio's boys handle it themselves? They would have finished it. Now he is only wounded. He will squeal, and so will his father; so will all the women. They are the ones I am afraid of. They will talk. Nobody can prove who shot Faustino. You were with his father; nobody saw me. I have a good pair of legs. I was with some friends two leagues away a few minutes before, and I set the clock ahead. When I left the house I took good care to have them notice it.

Esteban. Yes, we would have been safe if that had been all. But you talked; you gave yourself away.

Rubio. You ought to have killed me. That was the first time in my life that I ever was afraid. I never expected they would let Norbert go. I told you that we ought to go into court and have Acacia testify that Norbert had sworn he was going to kill Faustino, but you wouldn't listen. Do you mean to tell me that you couldn't have made her do it? We could have got others, too, to say the same. Then it would have been easy; they would never have let him go. I know I made a fool of myself, but when I saw that Norbert was free, that the law—yes, and Tío Eusebio—would never stop there, that they would look somewhere else, then I was afraid for the first time. I wanted to forget. So I began to drink, which I never do, and I talked. You ought to have killed me then; you had ground for it. They were talking already in the village; that was what scared me. When I heard that song—it put the blame here. Norbert and his father suspect. After what happened before, they have their eyes open. That is the talk that has got to be stopped, no matter what comes of it. That is the danger—the crime will be known by the cause. Nothing else counts. So long as nobody knows why he was killed, nobody will ever find out who killed him either.

Esteban. But why? Why was he killed? What was the use of killing anybody?

Rubio. I don't know. Don't ask me. Weren't you talking all the time? "If another man gets her, look out! Something happens." Then you told me she was going to be married. "I can't scare this one off; it's all over, he will take her away. I can't think. . . ." Didn't you come to me in the morning early again and again, before it was light, and wake me up and say: "Get up, Rubio; I haven't closed my eyes all night. I must get out. To the fields! I must walk!" And then we'd take our guns and go out and walk for hours, side by side, without speaking a word.

At last, when the fit has passed, and we'd put a few shots in the air so that nobody could say that we did no hunting when we went out to hunt, I'd tell you that we scared away the game; but you said we frightened evil thoughts: and down we'd sit on some hummock and then you would burst out laughing like one mad, as if some weight had been lifted from your soul, and you'd catch me around the neck and talk, and talk, and talk—you didn't know how you talked, nor what you said, nor why, nor whether it had any sense at all; but it always came to the same thing: "I am mad, crazy, a wild man! I cannot live like this. I want to die. I don't know what devil has gotten into me. This is torment, hell!" And then you'd shuffle the words again, over and over, but it was always the same, you were dying—death! And you talked death so long that one day death heard—and he came. And you know it.

Esteban. Stop! Why do you have to talk?

Rubio. Take care, master! Don't you touch me! I know what was in your mind when we were coming down the mountain. Make no mistake. You lagged behind. Another minute and your gun would have been at your shoulder. But don't you do it, master, don't you try! We'll stick together. I know how you feel; you're sick. You never want to see me again. If that would help, I'd get out. What did I care, anyway? It was nothing to me. Whatever I got you gave me afterward. It was your idea. I never asked. I don't need money. I don't drink, I don't smoke. All I want is to rove over the mountains, to do what I like, to be free. I want to be my own master. You trusted me, and I was proud of it. I know how you feel. We are like brothers. I'll take the blame. You needn't worry. They can grind me to powder but I'll never say a word. I'll tell them I did it—it was I—because—it's none of their business—just because. I don't care what they give me: they can make it ten years, fifteen. What's the difference? Then you fix it; you have influence. Only don't let them make it too much. Get busy; cut it down. Others have done the same. In four or five years everything will have blown over. Only I don't want you to forget. When I come out we will be brothers, the same as before. We can work together; we can do what we please. Only I mean to be my own master, to have power, to feel power in my hands! Nobody can stand alone. We'll be brothers. Hush! Some one is coming—the mistress!

[RAIMUNDA *enters, carrying a water-jar. She sees* ESTEBAN *and* RUBIO *and stops short, dazed. After hesitating for a moment she proceeds to fill the jar from a pitcher.*]

Rubio. Señora!

Raimunda. Get out of my house! Don't you come near me! What are you doing here? I never want to see you again.

Rubio. Oh! You are going to see me again—and hear me.

Raimunda. What do you mean? This is my house.

Rubio. Just a word. Soon we will all be in court. We had better fix it beforehand. Because a few fools open their mouths is no reason why a good man should go to prison.

Raimunda. More than one will go. You don't expect to get out of it?

Rubio. I don't know. Only one will go, but that one will be I.

Raimunda. It will?

Rubio. But when I shut my mouth I don't want other people to talk. Take it from me: what you think is not so. Norbert and his father are back of these lies; they are the ones who do all the lying. They made up that song, too. It's a lie, and they know it.

Raimunda. Is that so? You have agreed then on your story? Well, I don't believe one word of it. Gossip and songs are nothing to me. I believe nothing but the truth, the truth that I know—and I know it so well that I have known it all along. I guessed it from the beginning. I might have thought—but no, I never thought anything of you. He, he might have confessed; it would have been only fair. He might have known that I would hold my tongue, not for him, but for this house—which was my father's house—for my daughter, for my own sake. But why should I keep still when everybody knows it, and the very stones shout? They sing it from the housetops.

Rubio. So long as you keep still, the rest can sing all they want to.

Raimunda. Keep still? To save you? I could scream at the very sight of you! I could raise the village!

Rubio. Don't be a fool! What's the use?

Raimunda. Of course you weren't a fool when you murdered a man. And you nearly

murdered another—in this house—or had him murdered.

Rubio. I wouldn't have been a fool if I had.

Raimunda. You are a coward! You are a murderer!

Rubio. Your wife is speaking to you, master.

Esteban. Rubio!

Rubio. You see he can hear.

Raimunda. Yes, hang your head before this man. What a humiliation! You are his slave for the rest of your life. Could any fate be more horrible? Now this house has a master. Thank God, he cannot be less jealous of its honor than you!

Esteban. Raimunda!

Raimunda. When I talk, you interrupt. You are not afraid of me.

Esteban. If I had been man enough, I would have put a bullet through my head, and have been done with it.

Rubio. Oh, master!

Esteban. No! Stop there! That's all I'll take from you. Get out! What are you waiting for? Do you want me to beg you on my knees?

Raimunda. Oh!

Rubio. No, master. I am going. [*To Raimunda.*] If it hadn't been for me, there wouldn't have been any murder, but you might have lost a child. Now, you have another. The blood made him faint; a bad turn, that was all. But he's better. I am a good doctor. Some time you can thank me for it. Don't forget. I'll show you how. [*Goes out.*]

Esteban. Don't cry any more. I can't bear to see you cry. I am not worth all these tears. I ought never to have come back; I ought to have starved amid the brambles and thickets —they should have hunted me down like a wolf. I would not have raised my hand. Don't reproach me! Over and over again I have said to myself more than you can say. I have called myself murderer, assassin, times without number. Let me go. This is no longer my home. Turn me out! I am only waiting for them to take me. I don't go out on the road and give myself up, because I am too weak; my heart sinks; I am at the end of my tether. If you don't want me, tell me to go, and I will creep onto the highway and throw myself down in the fields, like carrion which you cast from your door.

Raimunda. Yes, give yourself up! Bring shame and ruin on this house, drag my daughter's honor in the dust and mire of the village! I should have been the law to you; you ought to have thought of me. Do you suppose that I believe in these tears because this is the first time I ever saw you cry? Better you had cried your eyes out the day that wicked thought first entered your mind, rather than have turned them where you had no right. Now you cry—but what am I to do? Look at me. Nobody knows what I have been through. It could not be worse. I want to forget, but I must think—think how I can hide the shame which has fallen on this house, keep it out of men's sight, prevent a man from being dragged from this house to prison—a man I brought into it to be a father to my child! This was my father's house; here my brothers lived with the fear of God in their hearts, and from it they went to serve their King, or to marry, or to till other fields by their labor. When they re-entered these doors it was with the same honor with which they went forth. Don't cry; don't hang your head. Hold it high, as I do. In a few minutes the officers will be here to trap us all. Though the house burn, and they are in it, they shall not smell the smoke. Dry your eyes; you have wept blood. Take a sip of water—I wish it was poison. Don't drink so fast; you are overheated. The thorns have torn your skin. You deserved knives. Let me wash you off; it makes my blood creep to look at you.

Esteban. Raimunda! Wife! Pity me! You don't know. Don't talk to me. No, I am the one who must talk—I must confess as I shall confess at the hour of my doom! You don't know how I have struggled. I have wrestled all these years as with another man who was stronger than I, night and day, who was dragging me where I did not want to go.

Raimunda. But when—when did that evil thought first enter your mind? When was that unhappy hour?

Esteban. I don't know. It came upon me like a blight, all at once; it was there. All of us think some evil in our lives, but the thought passes away, it does no harm; it is gone. When I was a boy, one day my father beat me. Quick as a flash it came to me: "I wish he was dead!" But no sooner thought, than I was ashamed—I was ashamed to think that I had ever had such a thought. My heart stood still within me for fear that God had heard, that he would take him away. From

that day I loved him more, and when he died, years afterward, I grieved as much for that thought as I did for his death, although I was a grown man. And this might have been the same; but this did not go away. It became more fixed the more I struggled to shake it off. You can't say that I did not love you. I loved you more every day! You can't say that I cast my eyes on other women—and I had no thought of her. But when I felt her by me my blood took fire. When we sat down to eat, I was afraid to look up. Wherever I turned she was there, before me—always! At night, when we were in bed, and I was lying close by you in the midnight silence of the house, all I could feel was her. I could hear her breathe as if her lips had been at my ear. I wept for spite, for bitterness! I prayed to God, I scourged myself. I could have killed myself—and her! Words cannot tell the horror I went through. The few times that we were alone, I ran from her like a wild man. If I had stayed I don't know what might have happened: I might have kissed her, I might have dug my knife into her!

Raimunda. Yes, you were mad—and you did not know it. It could only have ended in death. Why didn't we find some man for her? She could have married. You ought not to have kept her from Norbert.

Esteban. It was not her marrying, it was her going away. I could not live without the feel of her; I craved her day and night. All her hate, her spite, her turning away—which she always did—cut me to the heart; then, I came to depend upon it. I could not live without it; it was part of my life. That is what it was—I didn't realize it myself, because it always seemed to me as if it could not be—such things could not really be. I was afraid to face it. But now, I have confessed it to you. It is true! It is true! I can never forgive myself, not even though you might forgive me.

Raimunda. The evil cannot be cured by forgiveness; if I do not forgive you, it will not take the evil away. When I first heard of it, it seemed to me that no punishment could be too severe. Now, I don't know. To do what you did, you must have been all evil. But you were always kind and good, in season and out, to my daughter, when she was a child, when she was grown—and to me. I have seen it with my own eyes. You were good to all the servants from the day that you entered this house, to the men, to everybody who came near. You have been faithful and loyal, and worked hard for the honor of this house. A man cannot be good so long and become all bad in one day. Yet these things are; I know it. It chills my heart. When my mother was alive—God rest her soul!—we always laughed because she used to say that many a deed had been foretold in this world that afterward took place exactly as it had been foretold. We never believed it, but now I know it is true. The dead do not leave us when they die, though we lay them in the ground. They walk by the side of those that they loved in this life, of those that they hated with a hate that was stronger than death. They are with us, day and night. We do not see them, but they whisper in our ears. They put thoughts into our minds which are evil and wicked and strange, which we never can believe could be part of ourselves.

Esteban. Do you mean? . . .

Raimunda. Vengeance! This is vengeance from the other world. My daughter's father will not forgive me in heaven; he will never accept a second father for his child. There are some things which we cannot explain in this life. A good man like you cannot, all of a sudden, cease to be good; for you were good. . . .

Esteban. I was—I was always. When you say it, you don't know what happiness, what boundless joy it is to me!

Rainunda. Hush! Not so loud! I hear some one in the other part of the house. It is Norbert's father and his friends. They are going to take him away. If it had been the judge he would have come to this door. Stay here; I'll find out. Go in and wash; change your shirt. Don't let any one see you like this. You look. . . .

Esteban. Like a murderer, eh? Say it.

Raimunda. No, no, Esteban! We mustn't dwell on these things. We must stop this talk; that is first. Then we can think. Acacia can go to the nuns for a few days at Encinar. They are fond of her; they always ask how she is. Then I can write to my sister-in-law, Eugenia; she likes her. She can go to Andrada and live with her. She might marry, who knows? There are fine boys there—the town is rich—and she is the best match in our village. Then she could come back and have her children, and we would be grandfather and grandmother, and grow old with them

around us, and be happy once more in this house. If only. . . .

Esteban. What?

Raimunda. If only . . . .

Esteban. The dead man.

Raimunda. Yes. He will always be here, between us.

Esteban. Always. The rest we can forget. [*Goes into the room.* ACACIA *enters.*]

Raimunda. Acacia! Were you there?

Acacia. Yes. Why not? Can't you see? Norbert's father is here with the men.

Raimunda. What are they doing?

Acacia. They seem more reasonable; they were surprised to find him better. Now they are waiting for the judge. He is down at Sotillo examining the men. He will come here as soon as he is done.

Raimunda. I'll keep an eye on them.

Acacia. I have something to say to you first, mother.

Raimunda. You? Something to say? What is the matter with you? I am frightened. You never say anything.

Acacia. I heard what you mean to do with me.

Raimunda. You were listening at the keyhole, were you?

Acacia. Yes, because it was my duty to hear. I had to know what you were doing with this man. It seems that I am the one who is in the way in this house. I have done nothing wrong, so I have to take the blame, while you stay here and enjoy yourself with your husband. You forgive him and turn me out, so that you can be alone together!

Raimunda. What are you talking about? Who is turning you out? Who ever put that idea into your head?

Acacia. I heard what you said. You want to send me to the convent at Encinar and shut me up, I suppose, for the rest of my life.

Raimunda. How can you say such a thing? Didn't you tell me yourself that you wanted to go there and stay for a few days with the nuns? Didn't I refuse to let you go for fear that you would never come back, if you once saw the inside of the cloister? How often have you begged me to let you go to your Aunt Eugenia? Now, when it would be a good thing for us all, for the good of the family, which is your family—I tell you that we must hold our heads high—now what do you want me to do? Do you expect me to give up my husband—the man it was your duty to love as a father?

Acacia. You are as bad as Juliana. I suppose it was all my fault?

Raimunda. I don't say that. But he never looked on you as a daughter because you were never a daughter to him.

Acacia. I suppose I flaunted myself in his face? I suppose I made him kill Faustino?

Raimunda. Not so loud! Somebody might hear!

Acacia. Well, this time you won't find it so easy to have your way. You want to save this man and hush it up, but I am going to tell what I know to the judge, to everybody. I have only my honor to think of, not that of a man who hasn't any, who never had any—who is a criminal!

Raimunda. Silence! Not so loud! It freezes my heart to hear you. You hate him—and I had almost forgiven him!

Acacia. Yes, I do hate him. I always did hate him, and he knows it. If he doesn't want me to speak, to denounce him, let him kill me. I can die—that is what I can do—die. Let him kill me! then, perhaps, once for all, you might learn to hate him.

Raimunda. Hush, I say!—Here he comes. [ESTEBAN *enters.*] Esteban!

Esteban. She is right. She is not the one who ought to go. Only I don't want her to give me up. I will do it myself. I am strong now. I will go out on the road to meet them. Let me go, Raimunda. You have your child. You forgive me, but she never will. She hated me from the beginning.

Raimunda. No, Esteban, don't you go! Esteban, my life!

Esteban. No, let me go, or I will call Norbert's father. I will tell him. . . .

Raimunda [*To* ACACIA]. Now you see what you have done. It was your fault. Esteban! Esteban!

Acacia. Mother, don't let him go!

Raimunda. Ah!

Esteban. No, she wants to betray me. Why did you hate me like this? You never once called me father. You don't know how I loved you!

Acacia. Mother, mother——

Esteban. La Malquerida! The Passion Flower! I hang my head. But once—once how I could have loved you!

Raimunda. For once, call him father.

Esteban. She will never forgive me.

Raimunda. But she must! Throw your arms about his neck. Call him father. Even the dead will forgive us then, and be happy in our happiness.

Esteban. Daughter!

Acacia. Esteban! . . . My God! Esteban!

Esteban. Ah!

Raimunda. But you don't call him father. Has she fainted? Ah! Lip to lip, and you clutch her in your arms! Let go, let go! Now I see why you won't call him father. Now I see that it was your fault—and I curse you!

Acacia. Yes, it was. Kill me! It is true, it is true! He is the only man I ever loved.

Esteban. Ah!

Raimunda. What do you say? What is that? I will kill you—yes, and be damned with it!

Esteban. Stand back!

Acacia. Save me!

Esteban. Stand back, I say!

Raimunda. Ah! Now I see! It is plain to me now. And it is just as well! What is one murder to me? We can all die. Here! Come, everybody! The murderer! I have the murderer! Take this wicked woman, for she is not my child!

Acacia. Run! Get away!

Esteban. Yes, together—to hell! For I am damned for love of you. Come! They can hunt us like wild beasts among the rocks. To love you and hold you, I will be as the wild beasts, that know neither father nor mother!

Raimunda. Help! Help! Come quick! The murderer! The murderer!

[RUBIO, BERNABÉ *and* JULIANA *appear simultaneously at different doors, followed by others from the village.*]

Esteban. Out of my way! Take care who crosses me!

Raimunda. Stay where you are! The murderer!

Esteban. Out of my way, I tell you!

Raimunda. Over my dead body!

Esteban. Yes—— [*Raising his gun he shoots* RAIMUNDA.]

Raimunda. Ah!

Juliana. God in heaven!—Raimunda!

Rubio. What have you done?

A Man. Kill him!

Esteban. Yes, kill me! I don't defend myself.

Bernabé. No! Put the law on him!

Juliana. It was this man, this wretched man!—Raimunda!—He has killed her—Raimunda! Don't you hear?

Raimunda. Yes, Juliana. Don't let me die without confession. I am dying now. This blood. . . . No matter—Acacia! Acacia!

Juliana. Acacia!—Where is she?

Acacia. Mother, mother!

Raimunda. Ah! Then you are not crying for him? It consoles me.

Acacia. No, mother! You are my mother!

Juliana. She is dying! Quick—Raimunda!

Acacia. Mother, mother!

Raimunda. This man cannot harm you now. You are saved. Blessed be the blood that saves, the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ!

THE END

BEYOND OUR POWER

(OVER EVNE)

The First of the Two Plays of This Name

By BJÖRNSTJERNE BJÖRNSON

Translated from the Norwegian by EDWIN BJÖRKMAN

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BJÖRNSTJERNE BJÖRNSON AND HIS PLAYS

Björnstjerne Björnson, the author of *Beyond Our Power*, was born in 1832 in Kvikne, Norway. At the University of Christiana he met Ibsen, with whom he maintained a close friendship (broken, however, by more than one misunderstanding) all through his life. His first reputation was made as a writer of pastoral stories, and his fame, even to-day, is based upon his surprisingly diverse and multifarious achievements as novelist, poet, and dramatist, and as reformer, orator, and publicist. In his character as well as in the totality of his product he represents the new national spirit of Norway, and, in his capacity as dramatist, he was the actual founder of the national Norwegian theatre. In 1858 he became director of the Bergen Theatre, and from 1865 to 1867 he directed a theatre in Christiana. He afterwards became active in politics, but still found time for his enormous literary output. In 1903 he received the Nobel Prize. He died in Paris in 1910.

Björnson used the theatre primarily as a vehicle for his reformatory ideas, though, like Shaw, he possessed an innate feeling for the stage, as well as a knowledge of character, an ability to tell a story in terms of drama, and an instinct for sound dramaturgic craftsmanship that made him a genuine dramatist. Of his twenty-one plays the best are the serious plays of ideas, such as *Beyond Our Power, The Gauntlet, A Bankruptcy,* and *The Editor*. Though he undoubtedly ranks second to his great contemporary and compatriot Ibsen both as thinker and as technician, Björnson is yet a great dramatist, a clear and cogent reasoner, a clear-sighted painter of human nature, and an excellent craftsman. He is never subtle or even especially suggestive, but he is always sure, sincere, and direct, and often he is strong. He stands preeminently as the champion of free thought and liberalism in both politics and the world of thought, as against worn-out tradition and hidebound social and moral prejudice. His plays suggest a personality more likable and of larger human sympathy than Ibsen's. Perhaps it is this that provides his plays with their strong and direct appeal primarily to the emotions of the audience rather than, as is the case with the plays of Ibsen, primarily to the reason.

Beyond Our Power (translated also as *Beyond Human Power* and *Beyond Our Might*) is the first of two plays of that name; the second being a kind of sequel but on an entirely different theme. It is certainly the greatest of Björnson's plays and among the great plays of modern drama. Rarely has a dramatist seized a more lofty and important subject and treated it with such consummate appropriateness, and with such power and skill as to be commensurate with the profound interest and rare beauty of the theme. Sympathetic as is the play toward ordinary human relationships, toward what is loftiest in character and all that is lovely and pitiful in unselfish devotion, it is at the same time a protest against man's unavailing struggle to surpass his human limitations. The problem is perennial; but the human values of the play rise far above the importance of the problem.

Beyond Our Power was written in 1883 and was performed first in 1893 at the Théâtre Libre in Paris. In 1900 it was performed in Berlin, and 1902 (in English) in New York. It has held its place on the stage and within the past twenty years has frequently been revived.

CHARACTERS

Pastor Adolph Sang
Clara Sang, *his wife*
Elias } *their twin children*
Rachel }
Mrs. Hanna Roberts, *sister of* Mrs. Sang
The Stranger
Bratt, *a minister*
Kröyer, *a minister*
The Bishop
Blank }
Brey }
Falk } *ministers*
Jensen }
The Old Widow
Ågot Florvågen
Several Ministers

The action takes place in a village in Norway at the present day

BEYOND OUR POWER

ACT ONE

A poorly furnished room with walls of crudely dressed logs. In the right wall is a window in two parts that open separately outward. There is a door in the left wall. A bed stands near the middle of the room, a little to the right, and so placed that the head is in a line with the doorway, facing it. By the bed stands a small table covered with bottles, saucers, and such things. A wash-stand and a few chairs make up the rest of the furniture.

Scene One

Clara Sang *is lying in the bed. Her clothing is white, and the bed has a white cover. Her sister,* Mrs. Hanna Roberts, *is standing at one of the windows.*

Hanna. How the sun is shining on the leaves of the birches! And how tender the leaves are up here!

Clara. But now I smell the bird-cherry blossoms.

Hanna. I am looking and looking, but I cannot see a single bird-cherry tree.

Clara. You cannot see it, but it's there. The smell of it is carried down here by the morning breeze.

Hanna. But I smell nothing.

Clara. Oh, after such a rain the slightest current from the outside carries its own scent.

Hanna. And you smell bird-cherry blossoms?

Clara. Most distinctly!—and I think you had better close the lower window.

Hanna. All right. [*She closes the window.*]

Clara. Who was it that said there was danger of a landslide?

Hanna. That old fellow—the strokesman of the boat that brought us in. It rained and rained, and then he said: "This is dangerous weather—after a rain like this, things get loosened up in the mountains!"

Clara. I thought of nothing else last night. We have had slide after slide here, you know. Once—well, that was before our time—the church was carried away.

Hanna. The church?

Clara. Not from where it is now. It stood farther away then.

Hanna. Is that why it has been placed right up against the garden wall?

Clara. Yes. And when they open up the church windows in the summer, as they have done now, I can lie here and hear Adolph singing at the altar. That is, if our door here is open, and also the door to the living-room—and, of course, the window in the living-room must be open. He sings so beautifully. And when both doors stand open, I can see the church from this place. Come over here! That's why the bed is placed just here, you know.

Hanna. [*Going over to the bed.*] Oh, dearest, that I should come back to find you in such a condition!

Clara. Hanna!

Hanna. Why didn't you write?

Clara. First of all, America is so far away. And then—but we'll leave that to some other time.

Hanna. I didn't understand your answer yesterday, when I asked about a doctor?

Clara. Adolph was here, so I didn't want to answer. We have no doctor.

Hanna. You have no doctor?

Clara. Well, he came and came—and he's a good way off at that—but nothing happened. And when I had been lying a whole month here without sleep——

Hanna. A whole month without sleep? But that is impossible!

Clara. It's close to six weeks now!—Well, then it didn't seem to matter much whether the doctor came or not, don't you see? My husband asked him what my trouble was, and he gave it an ugly-sounding name. Adolph hasn't told me what it was, so I don't know. And since then we have not sent for him again.

Hanna. Are you not talking too much?

Clara. Whole days go by without my saying a word. At other times I talk continuously. I have to.—I suppose Adolph will soon be back from his morning walk now, and then he will bring me flowers.

Hanna. Couldn't I pick some for you, as you long so much for them?

Clara. No, thank you, for there are some that I cannot endure. But he knows them. —But, Hanna, you haven't told me yet about your meeting with the children on board the steamer. And I want so badly to hear about it.

Hanna. Everything was so upset here yesterday.

Clara. And then you were all tired. Think of it—the children are still asleep. From seven to seven! That's youth, sure enough!

Hanna. Well, they needed it. But I can only sleep a few hours at a time. And yet I don't feel tired.

Clara. That's what happens to everybody who comes up here where the midnight sun is shining. They seem to be startled out of their usual sleepiness.—But the children—are they not sweet?

Hanna. And such innocents! But in features they don't resemble you, nor Sang either —that is, except their eyes. That came home to me later.

Clara. Tell me, tell me!

Hanna. For if they had resembled you, I should have recognised them at once. You must remember, of course, that I had seen neither one of you since you were young. Well, I saw them as they were coming aboard, and later also, although they were travelling second-class——

Clara. Yes, poor things, they couldn't afford better.

Hanna. And yet I didn't recognise them. Then I happened one morning to be standing on the upper deck, and they were walking rapidly back and forth right below where I stood —to keep themselves warm. And each time they turned their backs to me to walk forward, I kept on seeing those eyes of theirs just the same. For those eyes were familiar to me. And then some gulls passed us so close that they made Rachel reach out both arms. She was scared, you know, for they seemed to be coming right at her. But that movement of her arms—it was exactly yours. And then I knew the eyes also. They were Sang's.

Clara. And then you went down to them at once?

Hanna. Do you need to ask? And the first thing I said was: "Is your name Sang?" And they didn't have to answer. I knew it perfectly. And then I said: "I am Aunt Hanna from America." And, of course, all three of us were very deeply moved.

[*Both sisters weep quietly.*]

Clara. Rachel had written to you that you should come over and see me! How was that?

Hanna. That's right. And it's something for which I shall always be thankful to Rachel. And how sweet she was! I had them moved over to the first cabin at once, and got her tucked up in a big shawl. She was just freezing. And I got him a plaid.

Clara. Dear!

Hanna. But, do you know—yes, it's part of the story—just then a squall seemed to turn the whole fiord black. We were at the foot of a towering mountain wall, naked and grey. A flock of gulls came out. Some of them flew right over our heads, screaming. Everything seemed so cold. A few poor huts along the shore were the only houses in sight, and we had travelled miles and miles without seeing any others. Nothing but peaks and rocks. This is the Northland, I thought. Here these poor frozen children have been brought up. Yes, I'll never forget it! It was horrible!

Clara. But it isn't horrible.

Hanna. Oh, Clara!—Now, lying there, as you are—can you remember what a fine, high-spirited thing you used to be?

Clara. Oh, yes! And I don't know how I am going to begin to explain everything to you. Good gracious!

Hanna. Why didn't you cry out across the sea to me? To me who had plenty and who could in so many ways have saved you from being worn out? Why didn't you write the truth? You have kept it hidden from me all these years.—Rachel was the first one who wrote and told me the truth.

Clara. Yes, yes—that's the way it was—and the way it had to be!

Hanna. But why?

Clara. If I had written as it was, and all of you had come rushing—I didn't want to be helped. Because I couldn't be helped.

Hanna. But then you actually lied——?

Clara. Of course, I did. I have been telling lies all the time—and to everybody. What else could I do?

Hanna. There are things here that pass all understanding. I come across one after the other.

Clara. Listen, Hanna. You used the words "worn out." You said that you could have saved me in many ways from becoming worn

out. Have you ever known a worn-out person capable of asking for help? Or one who knew how to resist?

Hanna. But before you *had* become worn out?

Clara. You don't know what you are talking of.

Hanna. Well, explain—if you can?

Clara. No, I cannot—not all at once—but by and by, perhaps.

Hanna. You didn't share his faith to begin with, did you? How strange that was! And was *that* one of the reasons?

Clara. No.—Well, it's a long story!—But it wasn't that. Our natures are so different—and yet it isn't that either. If Adolph had been like other men, ramping and raging—oh, then it would have been easy—I think! But long before he knew me, all his strength—and he has strength, I tell you!—had become absorbed by his work. It had turned into love and self-sacrifice. It had been made wholly and completely beautiful. What do you say to the fact that in our house a harsh word has never yet been heard? Nothing like a "scene" has ever occurred. And we shall soon have been married twenty-five years. He is constantly radiant as with the joy of the Sabbath. For to him the whole year is made up of Sundays.

Hanna. Heavens, how you love him!

Clara. It is not enough to say that I love him. I don't *exist* without him. And then you talk of resistance?—That is, at times I have had to, when matters have been going too far beyond our power.

Hanna. What do you mean by that?

Clara. I'll explain it to you later. But who can resist what is all goodness, all sacrifice for others, all joy and happiness? And who can resist when his childlike faith and supernatural powers sweep everybody else along?

Hanna. Supernatural, you say?

Clara. Haven't you heard of it? Haven't the children told you?

Hanna. What?

Clara. That Adolph, when he prays intently, gets what he prays for?

Hanna. Do you mean that he works miracles?

Clara. Yes!

Hanna. Sang?

Clara. Haven't the children told you?

Hanna. No.

Clara. But that's remarkable.

Hanna. Not a word has been said of anything like that.

Clara. But then they have not at all—Oh, they thought you knew of it! For Adolph—well, to the whole country he is "the wonder-worker." Of course, they thought you knew of it. And they are so diffident.

Hanna. But does he work miracles? *Miracles?*

Clara. Didn't you get an impression of something supernatural the moment you saw him?

Hanna. It would never have occurred to me to use that word—but now, when you speak of it—he gives you, in the very highest degree—what shall I call it?—an impression of spirituality?—a most wonderful impression. As if he didn't belong here!

Clara. Yes, don't you think so?

Hanna. I do.

Clara. Do you know, that sometimes I lie here completely tied up in a knot, with my legs drawn up to the chin almost—well, I don't dare to show you, for that might bring it on. And like that I sometimes lie whole days together when he is away, utterly unable to stretch out my limbs. Oh, it's dreadful, I tell you! Once, when he was up in the mountains—oh, those journeys into the mountains!—I was lying here for eight—think of it, eight!—days in that state. And no sooner did he appear in the doorway, so that *I* saw him and *he* saw me, than my arms and legs began to yield. And then he came up to me, and passed his hands over me, and in a moment I was lying as straight as I am now! And it is always like that—up they will come, up they will come! And the moment he enters the room, it passes!

Hanna. How very strange!

Clara. And what do you say of this? Sick people—that is, sick people who really believe—it has happened, not once, but a hundred times—when he came and prayed with them, they got well.

Hanna. Actually well?

Clara. Absolutely well! And more than that. There were sick people he couldn't reach—oh, you know the distances we have here—and to those he would write that, on such and such a day, at such and such an hour, he would pray for them, and that they must pray themselves at the same time. And from that hour their sickness would take a

turn for the better. This is true! I know of many such cases.

Hanna. Wonderful!—But you have never written me a word of all this.

Clara. Didn't I know you? Do you think I cared to expose him to your scepticism?—We have an old minister's widow here—you must see her! She lives only a little ways from here. She is the most venerable old lady I have ever seen.—Well, she had been paralysed for fifteen years when Adolph first came here—that's twenty-five years ago. *Now she goes to church every Sunday!* And she is close to a hundred.

Hanna. And he cured her?

Clara. Just by praying for her and by getting *her* to pray! Oh, how he can pray! And then there was the case of Ågot Florvågen. It's the most remarkable of all. For she was dead as far as we could see. Then he took one of her hands in one of his, and he put his other hand on her heart to warm it, and she began to breathe again. Now she is living with the old widow—right by here!—I might keep on like this till to-morrow morning, just telling and telling. Oh, here and elsewhere, among thousands and thousands of believing ones all over the country, his name has a glamour attached to it such as was never heard of. And now it is getting to a point where it doesn't leave us in peace a single day.

Hanna. Then I may also see this—what you speak of—while I am here?

Clara. As surely as I am lying here unable to raise myself an inch from the bed!

Hanna. But why shouldn't the miracle come to you also, Clara? Why hasn't he cured you long ago?

Clara. [*After a pause.*] There is a special reason.

Hanna. But can't you tell me?

Clara. No.—Yes, I mean. But later.—You'll have to open a window again. It's getting close in here. More air, please!

Hanna. Yes, yes, dear! [*She opens the upper window.*]

Clara. He ought soon to be here now. This morning he is staying away very long. If I could only smell the flowers. Now, after the rain, there must be masses of them. And it's seven o'clock—almost seven!

Hanna. [*Looking at her watch.*] Yes, so it is!

Clara. Ever since I have been lying here like this, I have been able to tell the time exactly.—Am I not going to get a breath of fresh air?—I think the wind must have gone down—Why don't you answer?

Hanna. I didn't hear what you said.—I simply cannot get over my surprise.

Clara. Well, I suppose there is nothing more remarkable in this country. Perhaps not in our entire age.

Hanna. What do people say about it? How do the peasants regard him?

Clara. I believe that anywhere but here it would have attracted twenty times—nay, a hundred times—as much attention. Here it is only as it should be.

Hanna. But, Clara—a miracle is a miracle.

Clara. Yes, to you and me. But there is something in nature up here that demands the unusual even of us. Nature itself seems to have passed the limits of reason up here. Almost the entire winter is one long night. And the summer is one long day, when the sun remains above the horizon all the time. You have seen it at night, haven't you? But do you know that the mists from the ocean at times make it appear three and four times larger than it is? And then the colour effects produced at sea, on the mountains, and in the sky—running all the way from a fiercely glowing red to the gentlest, most delicate whitish-yellow! And then the colours painted by the Northern Lights on the wintry sky! More subdued, of course; but still there is in them such a wildness of pattern, such a restlessness, such change without end—And then all the other monstrosities of nature! Flocks of birds that run into the millions; schools of fish that would reach "from London to Liverpool," as one man wrote. Do you see these mountains rising straight out of the sea? They are not like other mountains.—And the ideas of the people are proportionate. They are simply boundless. Their legends and their fairy tales give you a sense of somebody piling continent on continent and then hurling the icy peaks of the North Pole on top of everything else. Yes, you may smile! But listen to their tales. Talk to the people. Then you will soon see that Pastor Adolph Sang is a man to suit their own hearts. His faith fits the place. He brought with him a fortune when he came here, and he has given away almost everything. That's the way it had to be! That's Christianity! And now, when he travels miles and miles to visit some poor, sick creature

and when he prays so that their innermost souls are laid open, and the light seems to get right into them, unreflected!—At times they catch sight of him far out at sea in impossible weather—he alone in a tiny, little boat—or perhaps one of the children, or both, may be with him—for he has been taking them along since they were six years old. Perhaps he works a miracle before he is off to another fisher village—and there again the same! It is as if they just expected it of him. And even more than that! If I hadn't held back—well, then we shouldn't have enough to live on to-day, and probably he would not be living. Not even the children would be spared, perhaps—Of myself it is no use talking. For I have reached the end.

Hanna. But then you haven't held back——?

Clara. So it may seem. But I have. Not by remonstrances. That would have done no good. No, I am forced to invent something—something new every time—or he'll see through it. And it brings me to despair!

Hanna. Invent something, you say?

Clara. There is one sense he lacks entirely: the sense of reality. He never sees anything but what he wants to see. Thus, for instance, he cannot see anything evil in anybody. That is, he sees it, but he doesn't care. "I hold on to what is good in men," he says. And when he is talking to them, they become good—absolutely every one! When he looks at them with those childlike eyes of his—what else could they do? But then, of course, it turns out badly afterward. For he ruins us for the sake of such people.—But that's the way he lives, without the least regard for actual conditions of any kind, small or great. If permitted, he would take our last cent—what we were to live on to-morrow! "God will surely give it back to us, for it is what he has told us to do."—When the weather is such that the hardiest sailors won't venture out in a ship, not to speak of the pastor's sail-boat, then he wants to start out in a mere skiff—and perhaps with his own little child in the stern at that!—He has ventured across the mountains in a fog and wandered around up there for three days and nights without a vestige to eat or drink. They went in search for him and brought him back. And a week later, with the fog still lasting, he wanted to try the same trip again. Somebody was ill and wanting him!

Hanna. But can he stand it?

Clara. He can stand everything. He goes to sleep like a tired child, and sleeps, sleeps, sleeps. Then he wakes up, eats, and begins it all over again. He lives in some region apart from the rest of us: for he is innocent through and through.

Hanna. How you do love him!

Clara. Yes, it is the only thing that is left of me. This difficulty about the children finished me.

Hanna. The children?

Clara. They took harm from staying here. No regulation or discipline: it turned them topsy-turvy. Never any check on whatever was held right! Never any reasoning—only inspiration! They were already grown up and had learned nothing but to read and write.—And how I fought to get them away from here! And then, for five years, to keep them over there, and to get them some education! It took the last remnant of my strength. Now it is all over with me.

Hanna. Dearest, dearest!

Clara. You don't mean to—you are not pitying me, are you? Me, who have had for companion on my journey the best man on earth, the noblest will in all mankind!—In that way one does not live so long as otherwise—true! But one cannot have everything. And to choose something else—oh, dear!

Hanna. But he has destroyed the rest of you.

Clara. He has! Exactly! That is, he has not destroyed *all*—for he was not permitted to do so. And he would have destroyed himself, too, had he been given a chance. He is always going beyond his power.

Hanna. Beyond his power? When he really works miracles? And comes out of everything unharmed?

Clara. Don't you think the miracles also depend on the fact that he is going beyond his power?

Hanna. Now you scare me. What do you mean?

Clara. I mean that the prophets must have been like that. Those of the Jews as well as of the Pagans. In certain directions they were capable of more than we because they lacked so much in other directions. Yes, that's the way it has seemed to me.

Hanna. But don't you *believe?*

Clara. Believe? What do you mean by that? We sisters come from a more or less

neurotic old family of sceptics—an intellectual family, I dare say. I admired Adolph. He was unlike all others, better than all others. I admired him until I fell in love with him. It wasn't his faith that did it: to me that was only one of his peculiarities. How far I now share that faith with him—I don't know.

Hanna. Don't you know?

Clara. I have been so harassed, I tell you, that I have had no chance to make up my mind about it. Such a thing takes time. I have had my hands full trying to steer us straight from one wave crest to another. The effort of it has wasted me prematurely. Long ago I lost the power of dealing with large problems.—It's barely possible for me to tell what's right and wrong. Oh, in a crude way, of course—but not in a finer sense! I must do what I can. And so with my faith, too! More than that is beyond my power.

Hanna. And he knows it?

Clara. He knows all. Do you think I could hide anything from him?

Hanna. But does he not want you to believe what he believes himself?

Clara. Not in the least. This matter of faith, if we are not to be lost—it is God's own concern, he says. Ours is to be true. If we are, the faith will come—here or elsewhere. Oh, there is nothing inconsistent about him!

Hanna. But isn't he working for the spread of his faith?

Clara. In his own way. Never, *never*, by pressure. He shows absolutely the same consideration for everybody. For everybody—do you understand? Oh, there is no one like him!

Hanna. You still see him as you did in those first days of rapture! And this although your eyes have grown old!

Clara. Yes, though my eyes have grown old.

Hanna. But now as to your faith in his miracles—at bottom you don't believe in them at all?

Clara. What are you saying? There is nothing else in the world in which I believe so completely!

Hanna. When you don't dare let him go out in a storm—when you don't dare feel sure of getting back what he gives away, even if it be all you have left—then you don't believe in them.

Clara. Rather than permitting such a thing—Oh, this is where my strength lies, I tell you!

Hanna. All right. But it is not the strength that springs from faith.

Clara. No, you mustn't—If there should be some contradiction here—what of it? All of us are full of contradictions—all but he! And then, you know, to throw oneself and one's children into the sea—that's not faith: it is to tempt God.

Hanna. But it seems to me that a miracle may be wrought then as at any other time—whether our own lives are at stake, or those of other people.

Clara. But to *put* one's own life in danger?

Hanna. When it is done to save others? That cannot be called to tempt God.

Clara. Listen—no, let's drop it. I am too tired. All I know is that if he wants to take the children's livelihood and give it to people that are bad and useless, or if he wants to start across the mountains in a fog, or put to sea in a storm—then—then I just throw myself across his path. I'll do anything I can think of, absolutely *anything*, to stop him! —Suppose he should try to do something of that kind just now—I have not been able to stand on my feet in many a month—but then I could do it! Then I could! I am sure of it! At such moments *I* can also work miracles. For I love him and the children.

[*Long pause.*]

Hanna. Can I help you in any way?

Clara. Let me have some eau de Cologne. Put some on my temples. And let me smell it too, of that you brought me yesterday. Hurry up, please! Can't you get the cork out?—The corkscrew is over there—no, no, over there! And open the lower window—the lower one also!

Hanna. Yes, yes!

Clara. Thank you!—If the ground were not so damp after these horrible rains, I should go outside a while—can't you get the cork out?

Hanna. In a moment!

Clara. Push in the screw a little further—but not too far—that's it—that's it—now—no—*jasmin!*

Hanna. Jasmin?—There is no jasmin!

Clara. Jasmin, jasmin—! It is he! I hear him! It is he! The Lord be thanked! Now I'll be quiet—quiet! Oh, the blessing of it! There—he is!

[Sang *enters.*]

Scene Two

Sang. Good morning again!—Good morning, dear Hanna! Oh, that we have you here—that we have you here!—Such a morning as this, so full of song and fragrance, you don't have in America—or anywhere else in the world!

Clara. And my flowers?

Sang. Do you know what happened, Clara?

Clara. You gave them away?

Sang. No! Ha-ha! Not this time, as Tordenskjold[1] said.—Oh, but you are a bad one!—Here we have ranted and raged at this endless, horrible raining, and been afraid of landslides and falling rocks—and all sorts of disasters. And the rain has done nothing but bring us a great blessing!—When at last I saw the sun again this morning, and went out—what a flowery host there was to meet me! I have never before seen anything like this year! Oh, the richness of colour and odour all around me—and all of a sudden it filled me with such a sense of joy that I couldn't but think it a shame to step on the things that brought me such happiness. And so I turned aside, and found a path, and this I followed, looking down into all those dewy eyes at my feet. What a crowding there was among them! What a will to live in that crowd! What passion! Even the smallest among them craned their necks to reach the sun. How eager, how greedy, they were! Really, I think some of them must have rushed ahead at such a rate that they will send their pollen dust courting before the day is over! And I have already seen several bumble-bees. They didn't know where to turn in the midst of all that fragrance. For there were thousands and thousands of blossoms, and each thousand tried to surpass all the rest in passionately tempting odours. Oh, such doings! And you may be sure there is individuality, too, in all this millionfold multiplicity. Yes, there is! And so I couldn't pick a single one of them.—But I have something else for you to-day!

Clara. [*Who has been signalling to her sister while* Sang *was speaking.*] Have you?

Sang. I, too, will try to raise on high a flowery cup.

Clara. Dear, what is it?

Sang. Well, I suppose you never thought me mean enough to keep anything to myself? But I can!

Clara. I have noticed for a long time that there was something——

Sang. Have you really? And I who haven't said a word this time!—But when your illness didn't frighten me as much as the rest, there was good reason for it.

Clara. But what is it?

Hanna. Yes, what is it? She is getting excited!

Sang. Now I'll tell at once. I have helped so many and cannot help her—because she is self-willed, and I cannot pray with her as I should. And I have no power over those that don't pray themselves—that is, when they can pray at all. And so I wrote to our children to come home. And last night, when I sent them to bed so early, I told them why I did so—that I wanted them to have a good night's sleep, and then be ready at seven in the morning to help me pray at their mother's bedside.

Clara. Oh, dearest, dearest!

Sang. We'll weave a prayer chain around you! One of us at your feet, one at your head, and I right in front of you! And we won't cease until you fall asleep. Not until then—not until you sleep! And then we'll repeat it until you get up and walk with the rest of us. That's what we are going to do!

Clara. Oh, you dear soul!

Hanna. What did the children say?

Sang. You should have seen them! How it stirred them! I tell you, their faces were as white as sheets. And then they looked at each other.—But I guessed that they wanted to be left alone.—I can see that you are stirred by it, too. Your eyes close. Perhaps you also want to be left alone?—For we are going to have a visitor—a wonderful visitor—and it is necessary to be prepared!—What time is it?

Hanna. After seven.

Sang. Not yet, for then they would be here. You have forgotten to set your watch according to our local time.

Hanna. Oh, no, I haven't.

Sang. Then you haven't set it right, my dear. How can you imagine that grown-up children would oversleep when called to pray at their mother's bedside?

Hanna. I'll go up to them.

Sang. No, no, no! They must not be disturbed these last few moments. I know what it means.

[1] A famous Danish admiral of Norwegian birth, who had many hair-breadth escapes in his numerous encounters with the Swedes.

Hanna. They won't hear me. I'll just take a peep at them. [*Goes out.*]

Sang. Now be careful, please!

Scene Three

Sang. It's fine of her to be so eager about it.

Clara. Dearest!

Sang. Your voice is troubled—? Oh, do be hopeful now! I have never felt more certain of myself. And you know from whom that feeling flows.—Clara!—My beloved! [*He kneels beside her bed.*] Before we join in the great prayer, let me thank you! I have been thanking the Lord for you to-day. In the midst of all this spring-time glory I have been thanking Him. So boundless was the joy within me and without me. And in my mind I have gone over what we have principally lived together. Do you know, I think I love you the more for not wholly sharing my faith? It keeps you still more in my thoughts. Your devotion to me comes wholly from yourself, from your will—and from nothing else. And I am proud of the fact that, by my side, you have remained true to yourself. But when I realise that you—without believing as I do—have sacrificed your life for my sake——

Clara. Adolph!

Sang. I'll put my hand over your mouth if you speak. Now it's my turn!—Oh, it's a great thing you have done. We other ones, we are giving our faith; but you are giving your life. What confidence you must have in me! And how I love you!—When the fervour of my faith frightened you, and you trembled for me, or for the future of the children, and when, perhaps, you didn't quite consider what you were doing—*I* know that you didn't have strength enough left to do otherwise.

Clara. No, I hadn't!

Sang. It is my fault. I have not known how to spare you.

Clara. Adolph!

Sang. I know it's so! You have sacrificed yourself little by little. And not for the sake of your faith, not for the hope of some reward here or there—but out of love alone. How I love you!—All this I wanted to tell you to-day. If Hanna hadn't gone out, I should have asked her to leave me alone with you a little while.—I thank you! This is your great day! And now the children will soon be here.—Let me kiss you again as I kissed you that first day! [Hanna *enters.*]

Scene Four

Sang. Well?

Hanna. It's *past* seven.

Clara. I knew it.

Sang. Is it past seven? And the children?

Hanna. They were asleep.

Sang. Asleep?

Clara. I knew it.

Hanna. Elias was dressed. He had thrown himself on the bed as if he didn't want to sleep, but just rest a little, and sleep had overtaken him in spite of himself. Rachel was sleeping with her hands folded on the cover. She didn't hear me.

Sang. I have asked too much of the children. That's what I always do.

Hanna. They had hardly slept for two days and nights—or since we met.

Sang. But what did the Lord mean then, by giving me such strength to-day? And by making me feel so certain of myself?—I must try to discover it! [*Going out.*] Pardon me a moment, dear friends!—Why exactly this day——?

Scene Five

Clara. Did you wake them?

Hanna. Of course.—Do you know what I think is the matter?

Clara. Good Lord, yes!—Oh, I am trembling already!

Hanna. Can anything be done about it?

Clara. No—nothing except what I can do myself to soften it.—Oh!—There was a something in their eyes yesterday—now I understand what it was.

Hanna. They have lost their father's faith.

Clara. They have lost their father's faith.—The poor things, how they must have been struggling and suffering! Loving and respecting him more than anything else on this earth, as they do!

Hanna. That's why they were so quiet yesterday.

Clara. That's why the slightest thing moved them so easily.—Oh, and that's why Rachel wrote for you. Somebody had to be here—and she herself didn't dare.

Hanna. I think you are right.—How they must have been wrestling with this!

Clara. Oh, the poor things, the poor things!

Hanna. Here comes Elias.

Clara. Is he coming?

Elias. [*Throwing himself on his knees beside*

his mother's bed and burying his face in his hands.] Oh, mother!

Clara. Yes, yes—I know everything.

Elias. You know? Oh, it couldn't be worse!

Clara. No, it couldn't.

Elias. When he said last night, that at seven o'clock this morning——

Clara. Don't now! I cannot bear it!

Hanna. Your mother cannot bear it.

Elias. I won't—I knew it had to come. In one way or another. It had to come in the end.

Hanna. Can you bear to hear it?

Clara. I must hear.—Tell me——

Hanna. What is it?

Clara. Elias—are you not there?

Elias. Here I am, mother.

Clara. And Rachel?

Elias. What do you mean, mother?

Clara. Where is Rachel?

Elias. She's getting up. She was awake with me till midnight. But then she couldn't any longer.

Clara. Children, how—oh, how—how did it happen?

Elias. That we lost father's faith?

Clara. That you lost your father's faith, children? [Sang *enters.*]

Scene Six

Sang. Have you lost your faith?—My boy—Have you lost your faith?

Hanna. Look at Clara—look at her!

Sang. [*Hurries over to the bed and puts his hands on* Clara.] It'll stop! It won't come!—Thank God!

Clara. It's—passing—but you must hold me.

Sang. I will hold you!

Clara. And don't let me cry—oh!

Sang. No, no! No crying! [*He bends down over her and kisses her.*] Now you must be strong!—Clara!—There now! Don't be sorry now! You must remember how sorry *they* have been. In their suffering and pain, they have wanted to spare us. Shouldn't we, then, spare them now?

Clara. Yes.

Sang. That's why this attack came. So that we might have time to think. Or we might have showed bitterness toward them. Especially I, in my eagerness. Where is Rachel?

Hanna. She's coming. She was awake with Elias till midnight.

Sang. Those children, those children!—How could you—? No, no! I don't want to know it. You have always been honest. What you have done—you had to do.

Elias. I had to. But it was dreadful.

Sang. Your faith came too easily, here with me. I am all emotion. And perhaps this is the beginning of a faith that cannot be lost.

Elias. I feel like a criminal—but I am no such thing.

Sang. Do you think I could doubt you for a moment, my boy? You mustn't misunderstand because I cannot quite control myself. It is because I have counted so much on your faith. So it will take some time before I—No, no, no! Forgive me, Elias! How could you help it? [Rachel *comes into the room but withdraws shyly to the background;* Sang *catches sight of her.*] Rachel!—Oh, Rachel! [*She comes forward and kneels beside him.*] Ever since you were a little child, *you* have given me more faith than any book—How can this be possible?—No, if they have been able to win her over, then I must know the way of it—For that anybody could take *you* from me——

Rachel. Not from *you,* father!

Sang. Pardon me! Oh, I didn't mean to hurt you—Come to me! [*She throws herself into his arms.*] I promise you, children, that from now on, I shall not mention this matter again.—But first I must know—you cannot wonder at that—how it could happen.

Elias. If you were to talk with me for days, father—I don't think I could get to the bottom of it!

Sang. No, that's beyond me. I cannot argue about faith. That's something I don't understand at all.

Elias. But you have to hear me——

Sang. If it can be of help to you, that's another matter. And then you know that I want to hear.—But can't you tell me briefly—just in a few words? What was it that made you—that—well—that decided you, children?

Elias. I think I can tell in a few words. Rachel and I—we discovered that the Christians were not as you had told us they should be.

Sang. But, children——

Elias. You sent us to the best ones you knew. And I do think them better than all

the rest. But soon Rachel and I agreed on something, and she was the first to say it: there is only one real Christian, and that's father!

Sang. Oh, but, children!

Elias. If they had proved a little more or a little less what you are—then we wouldn't have been so disappointed. But they are something else—something entirely different.

Sang. What do you mean?

Elias. Their Christianity is merely a convention. In their life and in their teachings, they bow down to the established order—to the order established in their own time and place. To institutions, customs, prejudices, economical conditions, and all sorts of things. —They have picked out every loophole in the faith, so that they can make it fit in with whatever happens to be.

Sang. Are you not too severe?

Elias. *You* seek out what is most ideal in it, and strive for that—and *this* makes the difference!

Sang. But, dear children, what have *you* to do with this difference?

Elias. It has set us thinking, father—You cannot wonder at that?

Sang. Think as much as you please. As long as you don't judge.

Rachel. I don't think we have been judging. And do you know why? Because we saw that their teachings were as natural to them as yours is to you.

Sang. Well——?

Elias. But what is then Christianity? It cannot be what they teach?

Sang. Suppose it isn't? What does it matter? When they act according to their understanding?

Rachel. But, dear father, is Christianity then something which only one in a million can reach?

Elias. Must all the rest be mere bunglers at it?

Sang. Whom do you call a Christian?

Elias. Him alone who, from Jesus, has learned the secret of perfection, and who is striving after it in *everything.*

Sang. I think that a charming definition! You have some of your mother's delicate discernment!—Oh, it was always my cherished dream that you some time—No, no, no—I have given you my promise, children—and I *shall* keep it. You were saying—? Yes, that's good: it's splendid!—But listen, my son: may not everybody *try* to become a Christian without being called a bungler on that account? What do you say? Is it not here that faith helps out—that the merits of one make up for the shortcomings of millions?

Elias. Now you have said it! When we strive with our whole heart—*then* faith does the rest.

Sang. Well, then?

Elias. But there is only one human being who puts this into practice—and that one is you. The rest—oh, don't be afraid! I am not saying this to accuse anybody. What right have I to do so? The rest—either they ask for so little that their peace need not be disturbed—they do just what suits them; or they try really—and overreach themselves. Yes, that's just the word!

Rachel. Yes, that's the word. And it was this thing, father dear, that made me say to Elias: if those ideals are so little suited to man's powers and conditions even at the present time, how can they have come from Him who is omniscient?

Sang. And it was you who said that?

Elias. We could not dispose of Rachel's doubts. And so we began to study. We traced those ideals backward through history —and we were carried *beyond* the beginning of the Christian era.

Rachel. They are—all of them—much older than Christianity.

Sang. I know it, children.

Elias. Dreamers proclaimed them long before——

Sang. Oriental and Greek dreamers proclaimed them in a time of despair; a time when the best ones longed for nothing but to flee to some land of new birth—just to get away! I know it, children.—So this was what made you fall? Merciful heavens!—As if that land of new birth, the millennium, were less true for being an old, an immensely ancient, Oriental dream?—And if it has kept us waiting so long for its coming that weak souls are beginning to call it an impossible dream —and the demands that lead to it, impossible ideals—what does it prove?—Nothing about the faith, but much about those that preach it. Oh, yes—much about those that preach it.—I won't speak of them, but will only tell what happened to myself. I saw that Christianity was crawling on its belly—and carefully dodging every little hillock at that. Why can it be doing so, I asked myself. Can it

be because—if it stood straight up—it would pull everything off its hinges? Is Christianity impossible? Or don't men dare?—If only one dared—would not thousands dare with him? And so I felt that I must try to be that one man. And I think everybody should make the same attempt. Otherwise he is not a true believer. For to believe is to know that nothing is impossible to faith—and then to show this faith.—Do you think I say this as a boast? No, as an accusation against myself! For although so much grace has been granted me, and I have built so high, I, too, every so often, fall away from the Lord.—Have I not been going around here and thought it impossible that she could be saved by me alone?

Have I not been distrustful and looking to others for help?—That's why God took all help away from me. For this reason he permitted that you also should stumble over "the impossible," and come and tell me about it. For in such manner his hour had to be prepared. Now he wants to show us all what *is* possible!—Oh—how I have misunderstood! But now I do understand. I must do it *alone!* Now the command has come. Now I can do it.—That's why the great grace of preparedness descended upon me just this morning! Everything fits together now. Do you hear, Clara? It is no longer I speaking, but the great certainty that's within me—and you know from whom it always springs! [*Kneeling beside her.*] Clara, my precious friend, why shouldn't *you* be as dear to the Lord as anybody that believes wholly? As if the Lord were not the father of everybody.—The Lord's love is no privilege of those that believe. The privilege of those that believe is to *feel* His love and rejoice in it—and, in His name, to make the impossible possible.—You patient, you faithful one! Now I leave you in order to try it. [*He rises to his feet.*] Yes, to try it! I am going over to the church, children, because I want to be alone. I will not leave it again until, from the hands of the Lord, I have received sleep for your mother; and after the sleep, health, so that she may rise up and walk among us.—Be not afraid! I feel within me that He will grant it! He will not give it to me at once, for this time I have doubted. But I shall not give up—I shall wait for my Lord, who is stern and kind.—Good-bye! [*He kneels over his wife in brief prayer.*] Good-bye! [*He kisses her; she does not move; he gets up.*] Thank you, children! Now you *have* helped me nevertheless. More than anybody could guess. Now I shall myself ring out the call to prayer. At the first sound of the bell you know that I have begun to pray for your mother. Peace be with you! [*Goes out.*]

Hanna. [*Who instinctively has opened the door for him.*] This is—this is—— [*She bursts into tears.*]

Elias. I must see—I must see him go into the church. [*Goes out.*]

Rachel. [*Coming forward.*] Mother!—Oh, mother!

Hanna. Don't talk to her! She sees you—but don't talk to her!

Rachel. I am afraid!

Hanna. From here, where I am standing, I can see your father. Now he will soon be at the church—Come!

Rachel. No!—I can stand it no longer! I am afraid!—Mother!—She is looking at me, but she doesn't answer me.—Mother!

Hanna. Be quiet, Rachel!

[*The bell is heard.*]

Rachel. [*Sinks down on her knees; a little later she cries out, but in a subdued tone.*] My God—Hanna!

Hanna. What is it?

Rachel. Mother is asleep!

Hanna. She's asleep?

Rachel. Mother is asleep!

Hanna. Really——?

Rachel. I must find Elias. I must tell him about it! [*She goes out.*]

Hanna. She is sleeping like a child. O God!

[*She kneels down; then a rumbling as of thunder is heard—prolonged, deepening, constantly deepening, growing more and more awesome; cries are heard outside; the house is trembling; and still the roar is increasing.*]

Rachel. [*Outside.*] The mountain is falling! [*Shrieks; comes running in.*] The mountain is falling right on the church! On us—on father—on us! It's rolling, it's roaring—it's like night—oh! [*She cowers down and hides her face.*]

Elias. [*Outside.*] Father!—Father!—Oh!

Hanna. [*Beside the bed.*] Now it's coming! Now it's coming!

[*The roar is at its loudest; then it decreases little by little; then the bell is heard again.*]

Hanna. [*Leaping to her feet.*] It's still ringing! He's alive!

Rachel. He's alive!

Elias. [*Outside.*] Father is alive! [*Coming nearer.*] The church is still there! [*Comes in.*] The church is still there. Father is alive. Right in front of the church, the slide turned aside—turned to the left. He's alive, he's ringing the bell—O God! [*He throws himself down beside the bed.*]

Rachel. [*Drawing nearer.*] Elias! Mother ——?

Hanna. She's sleeping!

Elias. *Jumps up.*] Is she sleeping?

Rachel. Yes, she's sleeping—

[*The bell continues to ring.*]

Hanna. She is sleeping just as quietly!

ACT TWO

A small room, with walls made of logs. In the rear, a door opening on a porch. This door stands wide open, disclosing a view of a narrow landscape abruptly shut off by a bare mountainside. There is a door in the right wall, and a big window in the left. Above the door leading to the porch hangs a cross, into which, under a glass cover, is fitted a gilded crucifix. In the foreground, to the left, stands a sofa, and in front of this a table with some books on it. Chairs are placed along the walls.

First Scene

Elias *enters from the porch, moving quickly and restlessly. He wears leather breeches and low shoes, and above the breeches nothing but a shirt. His head is uncovered. He stops for a moment. Then he goes over to the window and listens. A hymn sung by a male voice is plainly heard, though coming from a distance.* Elias *is deeply moved.* Rachel *enters softly through the closed door on the right, which she closes again behind her. Her brother makes a sign to her to stop and listen.*

Rachel. [*Also moved, says in a low voice.*] Let me open the door to mother's room.

Elias. [*In the same voice.*] Is mother awake?

Rachel. No, but she'll hear father. [*She goes out to the right, but returns soon and leaves the door open behind her; speaks in a very low tone.*] She smiled.

Elias. [*As before.*] Oh, Rachel!

Rachel. [*Showing emotion.*] Elias—don't say a word—I cannot bear it!

Elias. Look at that, Rachel! Could you imagine anything more beautiful? Hundreds of people around the church, and all of them still as still can be. And in there he is praying and singing without being aware of the people outside. The windows are open, but they are set too high for him to look out. And those without are scared almost to death lest he hear them and be disturbed by it.—Look! He was speaking of a prayer chain. All those people around the church—there is a prayer chain for you!

Rachel. Yes. [*They listen to the song, which ceases after a while.*] He is singing a great deal to-day.

Elias. Close the doors now. I have so much to tell you. I have been here twice to look for you.

Rachel. [*Goes softly out to the right; on her return, she closes the door behind her; then she says in a somewhat louder voice.*] A whole lot more people have arrived this afternoon.

Elias. And they are constantly coming—from miles off! You cannot see them all, for many of them are in the groves, listening to the lay preachers. They don't disturb father over there. And then the people go back and forth between the groves and the church.—And now, look over there, toward the shore.

Rachel. What is it? The ground is black with people. What can it be?

Elias. It is the mission ship that has just come in.

Rachel. The mission ship?

Elias. Don't you know that a lot of people from the East have rented a steamer to take them to the big mission conference in the city? Now that steamer is at anchor in the fiord.

Rachel. Here?

Elias. Here!

Rachel. But why do they come here?

Elias. For the sake of the miracle. When our delegates—Pastor Kröyer and another man—boarded the ship down at the pilot station——

Rachel. —then——?

Elias. —and told what happened here yesterday, and how father was still in the church all by himself, praying——

Rachel. Now I see!

Elias. Then not a soul among them would go on, but all wanted to come here instead. The bishop and the ministers begged them to

keep their words and promises. But they insisted on staying here. And so the others had to give in. And now they are here.

Rachel. The ministers also?

Elias. The bishop and the ministers—of course!

Rachel. But they'll not come in to us?—Elias, you shouldn't be dressed like that.

Elias. I can't stand clothes.

Rachel. You can't stand——?

Elias. They scorch me. And then I have a craving—well, as if I wanted to walk through the air. I can't describe it, but sometimes it seems as if I could do it!

Rachel. But, Elias!

Elias. There he is! There he goes now!

Rachel. Who? That man over there?

Elias. It must be he! Yes, it is! They carried him over here this morning, sick as sick can be—and now he is walking about—there you can see him!—It happened this morning, just as father sang for the first time. Nobody had expected him to sing. It made all of us burst into tears. And then the sick man got up without any help. We didn't notice it until he was walking around among us.—Mother will also get up, Rachel! I can see it as if it were already happening.

Rachel. Yes, she will get up. I have expected it any moment. But I tremble when I think of it.—Why are you looking at me like that, Elias?

Elias. Because—at times, when you speak, it seems almost as if it were verse. And it's the same when the others talk.

Rachel. But, Elias——

Elias. And then again—as just now—I hear nothing but the sound of what you say—not the meaning. For at the same time I hear something—something that is *not* spoken.

Rachel. That is not spoken?

Elias. Most often it seems to be father calling—calling me by name—as he did yesterday morning. [*With emotion.*] He had something in his mind when he gave me that name. It sings and it accuses—and with his voice. Incessantly, at times. It haunts me. And in the midst of it I feel a longing to plunge into some great danger. For I am certain that I should come out of it unharmed. No, don't be scared! Why, there is nobody here.

Rachel. Come, Elias, and sit with me beside mother. There is peace in her presence.

Elias. I cannot.—Rachel, answer me before God, search your final, your subtlest doubt, and answer me: is this a miracle that we have experienced here?

Rachel. Merciful heavens, Elias!—Why do you always come back to this?

Elias. But is it not dreadful that perhaps the only two people still doubting are his own children?—Just now I would give my life to feel certain.

Rachel. Don't, Elias! I beg you!

Elias. Tell me only what you do believe. This thing with the landslide? It's too big a thing to be merely accident. Don't you think so? And mother's sleep? The moment he began to ring the bell—sleep! And she slept in spite of the landslide. She sleeps as long as *he* is praying.—Is not this a miracle? And why shouldn't that other thing have been a miracle also—a great miracle?

Rachel. I almost think it was, Elias.

Elias. You do?

Rachel. But I am none the less afraid of it.

Elias. Afraid of it, if it be a miracle? But then you don't believe it was a miracle?

Rachel. Yes.

Elias. For this cannot merely depend on some magnetic power of healing? Or on the power of his personality? No, it must be something more! Is it a miracle? Do you feel sure?

Rachel. I cannot go into this now. It was to escape it that I sought refuge beside mother. Her honesty seems to fill up the whole room and put an end to all such questions.—Now, there is something else that is of more importance, Elias!

Elias. Something else?

Rachel. After all this! What will come next—when she has got up? For that is not the end of it. In the last instance——

Elias. In the last instance?

Rachel. In the last instance it is a question of her life! [*She begins to cry.*]

Elias. Rachel—My God!

Rachel. Mother has no power of resistance left. And he will go right on—right now!

Elias. With what?

Rachel. With this—whatever it be!

Elias. But suppose it be a miracle, Rachel? Why need we then be afraid?

Rachel. I cannot overlook the consequences—to mother and father—to all of us.—You don't understand me at all?

Elias. No.

Rachel. No! But to me it does not matter

what it is. It will destroy us. It will kill us in the end!

Elias. The miracle?

Rachel. Yes, yes! There is no blessing in it! A horror, that's what it is!—Elias!

[*She drags him into the middle of the room.*]

Elias. What is it?

Rachel. There is a man out there who is staring right at this window—a peculiar man—so very pale——

Elias. In a coat that is buttoned all the way up?

Rachel. Yes.—[*With a subdued cry.*] There he is in the room, too! [*She falls back as if she were facing a ghost, and finally she takes flight into her mother's room.*]

Elias. In the room?—Here?

[*At that moment a* Stranger *walks up to the porch from the left, crosses the threshold, and stands still just inside the door while he searches the room with his eyes.*]

Scene Two

Elias. [*As the* Stranger *appears.*] Yes, there he is!

Stranger. Will you permit——?

Elias. Who are you?

Stranger. Does it matter?

Elias. I have seen you here since yesterday.

Stranger. Yes, I came here across the mountains.

Elias. Across the mountains?

Stranger. I saw the landslide from above.

Elias. Really?

Stranger. And I heard the bell. And this morning I saw the sick man who got up and walked when your father sang—And now I want to ask: is your mother sleeping in there?

Elias. Yes. But not in the next room. In the one beyond.

Stranger. But if she should get up—then she would come in here? She would turn toward the church, where he is—don't you think? And so she'll come—here?

Elias. Yes, now when you speak of it——

Stranger. And so I ask of you—beg of you—may I be here? Wait here? See it? I have been filled with a burning desire—and now I cannot resist any longer. I'll not come in again until driven to do so. I'll not stay around here—and be in the way. But if the impulse should become irresistible, to come in here, and wait, and see—will you let me?

Elias. Yes.

Stranger. Thank you!—And I want to tell you: this day will decide my whole life!

[*He goes out through the porch to the right.*]

Scene Three

Elias. This day will decide my whole life! [Kröyer *enters the porch from the left.*] Kröyer, did you see him? The man to the right, there?

Kröyer. Yes, who was he?

Elias. You don't know him?

Kröyer. No.

Elias. Certainly a remarkable man!—This day will decide my whole life! O Lord! That's the word for me, too!

Kröyer. That's what I expected, Elias—that this day must be a great one for you. Who could resist what is happening here? If it were nothing but these hundreds of people praying around the church; and he within, unconscious of the rest. I cannot think of anything more beautiful!

Elias. Yes, don't you think so?—Oh, I'll throw aside all fear and doubt—this day will decide! What a word that was!—I have struggled and suffered without getting anywhere. And then it is *given* to me! And at once I feel more at peace.—I want to talk to you!

Kröyer. No—not now. I have a message for you.

Elias. For me? From whom?

Kröyer. I have just returned with the mission ship.

Elias. I know.

Kröyer. And now the bishop and the ministers are asking if they can have the use of this room for an hour or so?

Elias. For what purpose?

Kröyer. They feel it necessary to discuss what attitude they are to take toward what's happening here. And we know of no other place where we can be by ourselves.—Yes, it's no use getting surprised. We professionals, we members of the preachers' union, must try to look more rationally at such things than the rest, don't you know?

Elias. It will fill the room with a lot of loathsome discord.

Kröyer. Which may turn into harmony. For who can resist the miracle?

Elias. You are right! And yet—in here? As if they were putting a wedge between my father and my mother? And if father should

begin to sing again? Then we couldn't open the door to let mother hear?

Kröyer. What do you think your mother or your father would have answered?

Elias. Yes—beyond all doubt. You are right. They can have the room. But let *me* get out of this.

Kröyer. I'll arrange it. Are both doors closed between this and your mother's room?

Elias. Yes.

Kröyer. Then I'll close the window, and also that door, as soon as they are here.

Elias. Let *them* lock themselves in! I'll go out to the people where there is more sympathy. They are trustfully expecting that something great will happen to-day—and perhaps they will not have to wait much longer.

Kröyer. [*Following.*] Shall we pray for that, Elias?

Elias. Yes. Now, I will try!

[*Both go out to the left.*]

Scene Four[1]

Kröyer. [*Comes in from the left.*] Will you please step in?

[*He goes over to the window and closes it; in the meantime the* Bishop *and the* Ministers *enter; then* Kröyer *goes back to the door and closes it.*]

Blank. You, Kröyer, who are acquainted in this house, can't you get us something to eat?

Bishop. I know that we are making ourselves ridiculous. But the truth of it is that we were dreadfully seasick.

Brey. We couldn't keep anything down.

Bishop. And when we got into smooth water at last, and they had just begun to cook something for us——

Brey. Then came the miracle!

Falk. I am so *frightfully* hungry.

Kröyer. I fear nobody in this place has given any thought to food to-day, but I'll see. [*Goes out.*]

Jensen. I have regular food hallucinations. I have read about that kind of thing—but then you read so much you cannot believe. It's especially partridges I see.

Falk. Partridges!

Jensen. And I smell them, too: broiled partridges!

Blank. Partridges?

Several. Are we going to have partridges?

Kröyer. [*Returning, speaks while still in the doorway.*] Sorry. I looked in the kitchen and in the dining-room also. Not a thing. And no people around.

Brey. Not a single soul?

Falk. I am so *frightfully* hungry.

Bishop. Well, my dear friends, don't let us become altogether too ridiculous. We have to submit to the inevitable. Let us get on. Will you please be seated. [*He seats himself on the sofa; the others take chairs.*] Very briefly and very quietly—for we know that this is the habitation of a very sick person—we must try to agree how to behave in this matter. I have always held the opinion that the minister—as a rule—should remain neutral toward any excitement of this kind. Neither affirm nor deny until the excitement has subsided sufficiently to permit of a judgment. For this reason I wish with all my heart that we might have gone on. But we were not permitted to go on.

Ministers. [*In murmurs to each other.*] We were not permitted to go on! No, we were not permitted to go on.

Bishop. Everybody wanted to make for this spot, where the miracle was supposed to be at home, so to speak. And I don't reproach them on that account. But being with them, on board the same ship, our opinion will be demanded. And when we reach the conference, our opinion will again be asked for.—What is it, then?

Kröyer. If you permit me—with all due respect: either we believe in the miracle, and act accordingly; or we don't believe in it, and act accordingly.

Bishop. Hm?—There is a third way, my young friend.

Ministers. [*Murmuring among themselves.*] There is a third way! Indeed, there is a third way!

Bishop. The older one grows, and the more experienced, the more difficult it becomes to form a conviction—and especially in regard to supernatural things.—In the present case, time and conditions will hardly permit an investigation. And suppose we were to arrive at conflicting opinions? What impression do you think a clerical fight about miracles would make in these days of scepticism? A fight to decide whether or no miracles are worked at the present hour somewhere in the Northland?

[1] All the ministers, and especially the elderly one named Blank, speak with artificial precision, very broad vowel sounds, and a preaching drawl, as if they were always in the pulpit.

—I see my old friend Blank asking for the floor.

Blank. If I have understood Your Grace right, we have no need of first deciding whether a miracle has occurred or not. That is for God, our father!

Bishop. That is for him! That's the word! I thank you, old friend.

Blank. I maintain that miracles are as much regulated by natural law as anything else, although we cannot see the law. I maintain exactly the same thing as has been maintained by Professor Petersen.[1]

Falk. In that book he never gets published.

Blank. But which he will get published some time.—But if it be as I said—what importance can then be attached to any single miracle—whether near-sighted creatures like ourselves can see it or not? If the congregation believes it sees a miracle, then we'll praise the Lord together with the congregation.

Bishop. Then you want to acknowledge the miracle after all?

Blank. Neither acknowledge nor refuse to do so. We merely praise the Lord together with the congregation.

Bishop. No, my old friend, we cannot get out of this by singing hymns.

Ministers. [*Murmuring to each other.*] We can't get out of this by singing hymns. No, this we can't get out of by singing hymns.

Bishop. Mr. Brey has the floor.

Brey. Really, I cannot understand what should prevent us from acknowledging the miracle at once. Is it, then, so rare? I am seeing miracles all the time. In our congregation we are so accustomed to them that the strange thing would be *not* to see them.

Falk. I wish Brey would be kind enough to tell us something about the miracles that happen in his congregation.

Bishop. No, that would lead us too far afield.—You got up—do you wish to speak?

Jensen. Yes. In this case everything depends on the fact confronting us. Is it a miracle—several, perhaps—or is it no miracle at all?

Kröyer. Precisely.

Jensen. Every separate miracle must be investigated. But to do so, we must have some technical evidence, some evidence of a medical character, or perhaps the testimony of witnesses taken down by a reliable lawyer. With *this* at hand—then only can we ministers safely submit our spiritual evidence. And with "spiritual" I don't mean the kind of thing we hear from lay preachers and a lot of other people supposed to be inspired or supplied with divine grace. As usual, I have in mind plain, solid, sober truth—and the more plain, solid, and sober it be, the more "spiritual" it will prove.

Falk. Hear!

Jensen. Perhaps it will be found, then, that a miracle never occurs in this way. Never! It does not occur when it is expected and hailed by hundreds—nay, thousands perhaps—in a state of excitement and curiosity. Yes, curiosity! The miracle comes in an honest, plain, quiet, sober way to those who themselves are honest, plain, quiet, sober.

Falk. This is as if it were spoken out of my own heart!

Kröyer. With Falk's permission, I should like to point out something. Since I settled here as minister, I have repeatedly seen that none become more easily the prey of superstition than the very people that are most sober-minded.

Blank. That's just my experience! Verily!

Kröyer. Their suspiciousness makes them often deny what is clearly seen by everybody else. Instead they are attacked from behind, so to speak, by mysterious fears, and thus they are moved by things wholly invisible to the rest of us. I have grown to think that the craving for the supernatural has to such an extent become a heritage of man that if we resist it in one way——

Blank.—it gets hold of us in another. That's just what I have come to think.

Falk. Well, whether it start with the sober or the sottish, I want to ask once for all, if this means that we are now to surrender what the Church has gained of clearness and order, that we are to begin once more to flutter about like ordained *night owls?*

Brey. Are you looking at me?

[*All the ministers laugh aloud.*]

Bishop. Sssssshhh! Let us remember the invalid!

Falk. The craving for miracles is to the exercise of the faith what this activity by laymen is to the preaching of it—an excrescence, a disorder—or, if we go to the bottom of it, an atavism, a *regurgitation!*

[1] Professor Fr. Petersen, of the University of Christiana, a liberal theologian who, about the time this play was written, tried to "reconcile the scientific insistence on universal conformity to law with the Christian faith in miracles." (Just Bing: Norsk Litteraturhistorie.)

[*The other ministers laugh in a suppressed way until several of them begin to cough.*]

Bishop. Sssssshhhh!

Falk. A miracle not acknowledged by the clergy—not appointed and confirmed, s to speak, by the highest church authorities, with His Majesty the King at their head—is to me nothing but a vagabond, a tramp, a *sneak-thief.*

[*The* Bishop *laughs softly, and the ministers follow his example, while watching him closely.*]

Falk. It is all right to have a simple mind. I had it once myself. But when, as in my case, the minister in a big city has to be sad with the bereaved ones around the grave at one o'clock, and merry with the joyful wedding guest at three; when he has to sit beside a poverty-stricken deathbed at four, and dine in the Royal Palace at five; then he becomes familiar with the infirmities of man. And what he learns by it is this: to rely very little on persons, and very much on institutions.—Where the miracle appears, there all institutions perish in the revolt of the feelings. For this reason the Catholic Church has tried to make an institution of the miracle itself. But thereby it has forfeited the respect of all intelligent people, so that only the stupid and the selfish ones remain within it.—Once I was in a company of ladies—only myself and about twenty ladies. [*Subdued merriment.*] One of these ladies became hysterical, then another, then a third—six in all. [*Increasing merriment.*] Then I poured water on them—first on those six—one by one [*he makes a motion with his hand as if pouring out water several times*]; but afterward on several of the rest, too—for that kind of thing is contagious.

[*Loud laughter follows.*]

Bishop. [*Who is the first to recover himself.*] Sssssshhh! [*Then he bursts into open laughter again, and the rest with him; finally he recovers his composure once more.*] Sssshhhh!

Falk. I think that is the most wholesome way. Pour water on it!

[*There is still a great deal of laughter and discreet coughing behind handkerchiefs; several of the ministers express eagerly their gratitude to* Falk.]

Kröyer. Of course, we know Falk, and we know that he means what is right, in spite of his peculiar way of expressing himself. I am inclined to think that if he should see—well, that old lady, say—the minister's widow who is now close to one hundred years old—*he* would be the last one to pour water on her—although her presence among us is like a living miracle, and her faith is infecting everybody. The same thing holds true of the young girl Ågot Florvågen, who is looking after the old lady. To *our* eyes, to *our* hands, she seemed dead and cold. And *he* prayed over her and made her rise up. If one man testify, you must believe! [*General astonishment.*] Both of them are here now.

Several. They are here?

Kröyer. Perhaps they will come into this very room. They are on their way to this house, although it takes them a long time. The old lady wants to see for herself—she wants to see her who was not awakened by the landslide.—Now, you look at the old lady. Talk with her. Talk with the girl who attends her. The replies you get will be plain and honest as her own face. That would be of more help than all our doctrinal discussions. I do not say this in a spirit of reproach. I used to think as you do now—up to the time I became a minister in these parts. Nobody can be more painfully conscious than I am of what the Church has had to relinquish, of what meagre doctrines and false constructions are left to us—we are poor, with nothing left of the miracle—without courage to ask for a miracle—and we have to pretend either that we don't care for it, or that we have it and are rich in the possession of it!—I know every one of you well enough to know that if you only *dared*—if you could feel sure of witnessing a miracle so great that it met the test once for all prescribed by the Bible: "*All who saw it believed*"—oh, no matter how far you may have fallen short at other times, then you would become as children, you would surrender yourselves completely, you would sacrifice the days still left to you—only to proclaim it! [*Considerable emotion is shown, especially by the older men.*] I dare to make these confessions on your behalf, my brethren, because my place is within the circle of the spirit—that circle of which it has been said: either within, or without! Once within, and all the tricks prompted by our poverty will collapse on their own accord, and we shall dare to admit the truth!—What will be left of Christianity, if we declare the miracle lost to the church?

Elias. [*Entering from the outside.*] Pardon

me—there is somebody here who wants to look at my mother. It's the old widow of the minister.

[*All rise. In the doorway appear the* MINISTER'S WIDOW *and* ÅGOT. ELIAS *opens the door on the right and disappears through it. The* MINISTERS *push back their chairs and make way reverently for the old lady.*]

Widow. [*After having crossed the threshold.*] Let me go, Ågot.—Now I want to be alone. —Quite alone.—For this place has been visited by the Lord—it is holy.—This place is holy—here you stand face to face—and then it is better to be alone. [*She stands now so that she can look through the doorway on the right into the room where* MRS. SANG *is lying; she drops a curtsey; then she raises both her arms in an outburst of exaltation; having had another long look, she curtseys again, turns around, and walks toward the door leading to the porch.*] She was white—radiantly white—and she was sleeping like a child. Now, I have seen—such things shed light—oh, how they shed light on everything!—Thank you for letting me be alone!

Ågot. But were you alone?

Widow. Quite alone. Nobody but myself. And she was radiantly white.

[*They go out together.*]

Elias. [*Coming in again from the right.*] Both doors are closed again. And now I'll close this one, too.

[*He goes out; the* MINISTERS *remain standing, without moving.*]

Kröyer. You didn't speak to her?

Bishop. No.

Kröyer. There is a light on every face as of sunshine.—I can tell you why: people on whom the miracle has shed its glamour, reflect the light of it.—Let us talk this over.

[*They move together and sit down again.*]

Jensen. May I ask a question?—Don't you look upon conversion as a miracle?

Kröyer. What we call the miracle of conversion can be traced psychologically, step by step, and for that reason it is no miracle. It exists in other great religions, as well as in the form of purely moral conversion, although the latter is a silent one. But a Christianity which is founded on a wonder and yet, in the course of the ages, has lost its power of working miracles—what is it? Nothing but moral precepts.

Falk. The characteristic feature of Christianity is not the miracle, but the belief in resurrection.

Kröyer. Which *all* the great religions have; which is common to all people with religious feeling.

Bishop. What is your idea of Christianity, then?

Kröyer. To me Christianity is infinitely more than a moral code. More complete and more refined codes of this kind may be found outside of the New Testament. To me it is also infinitely more than the power of consecration: if it were not, then much else would equal it in rank.—Either Christianity is a life in the Lord that takes us beyond this world and all its precepts, or it is nothing at all. Either it is something more than mere consecration to an idea of any kind—that is, it must be a new world, a miracle—or it is nothing at all. [*He sits down, trembling and exhausted.*] There was so much—I wanted to say—but—I cannot.

Bishop. My dear Kröyer, the moment you came aboard this morning, I saw that you were overworked and ill. But that's what happens to every follower of Pastor Sang.

The Stranger. [*Has in the meantime opened the door in the rear and entered without closing the door again; he has drawn nearer step by step.*] May I say a word?

[*All turn toward him, and some rise.*]

Bishop. Is that you, Bratt?

Several. Pastor Bratt?

Others. Is *that* Bratt?

Bishop. You didn't come with us—how did you get here?

Bratt. Across the mountains.

Bishop. Across the mountains? You are not going to the mission conference then?

Bratt. No, I wanted to come here.

Bishop. I understand.

Bratt. It is the miracle that I am seeking. —And so I got here yesterday just as the landslide occurred. I was up there, only a little way off, and saw everything. And I heard the ringing of the bell.—And I have been here ever since.—And this morning I saw a sick man carried over to the church, and as the pastor began to sing within, the man rose, thanked God, and went his way. May I speak?

Bishop. Of course!

Bratt. For I am a man in distress, and I am coming here to ask your help, brethren!

Bishop. Speak, dear friend!

Bratt. I have said to myself: here I have met with the miracle at last. And the next moment: but was that a miracle after all?—For this is not the first place I have visited in order to find it. With blighted hopes I have turned back from every spot in Europe where the miracle was thought to dwell. Here, of course, the faith is bigger and simpler; and the *man* is great. What I have seen here has taken hold of me with supernatural power. But the next moment doubt has returned. This is the curse that rests on me, you see. I have incurred it by the seven years during which, as minister, I promised the miracle to those who would believe. I promised, because thus it was written—although I myself doubted—for I had never seen it come to anybody that believed. For seven years I preached that in which I did not have faith myself—and each time the dark days returned during those seven years—and they would come, just as did the wakeful nights—each time, because of my promise, I prayed with burning fervour: Where is that miraculous power which Thou hast promised Thy believers? [*He bursts into tears.*]

Bishop. Oh, you lay bare everything. And that's what you have always done.

Bratt. In binding words, each one stronger than the other, He has declared that whosoever will believe shall possess this power. Yes, the power of deeds greater even than those done by the Son of Man.—What has then become of that power?—After eighteen hundred years of passionate labouring for the faith, is there not one who believes in such measure that he can produce a miracle among us? Is the Lord's own promise not yet redeemed? It cannot be that the power of belief has been weakened. For this faculty cannot have developed contrary to all other racial faculties—so that it became lessened by constant practice. No: after more than eighteen hundred years of Christian preaching, it must in many, many families have become a millennially increased heritage, and it is still further multiplied by education. And yet this power is not strong enough to bring us the miracle? All the merged longings of the believing ones have not been able to produce one individual with a miracle-working power strong enough to make a believer of every one beholding it. For this is necessary; it is the test provided by the Bible. Time and again it says: "All that saw it, believed."—A miracle it must be then, that turns all who see it into believers. But instead of it, thousands upon thousands are falling away. For in spite of the promise, the miracle is not forthcoming.—A man possessing the knowledge of our own time, an educated woman of the present day—these will not be satisfied with what was unquestionably believed by men and women of the past. Not because their faculty of believing has grown less, but because it is better guarded. Their devotion is so much deeper and more intimate in character that, naturally, properly, it is more difficult to win. He who does win it will have the best that exists so far on this earth!—Therefore you must give as much, or it will never be yours! [*The ministers exchange remarks in whispers.*]—Religion does no longer constitute man's only ideal. If, at least, it is to be the highest one, you must prove it such. Man can live and die for what he loves—for his country, his family, his convictions. And as these things are the highest of all that exist within the limits of the natural, and as you want to show him something still higher—well then, you must *pass* those limits! Show him the miracle!

[*All appear strongly moved.*]

Falk. [*Rising.*] Somewhere a scornful word is to be read about the race that will not believe without signs and wonders.

Bratt. And do you know the answer of the race?—"We ask only for the signs promised by the Lord Himself—promised to whosoever will believe. Or is there not yet a single one among you that really believes? What, then, do you want of us?"—Yes, that's what the race answers.—But offer a miracle to that same race—one that cannot be picked to pieces by the sharpest tools ever shaped by doubt—one of which it can be said: "all that saw it, believed"—and then you may yet be witnesses of the fact that not the faculty of belief is lacking, but the miracle. [*Stir among the ministers.*] Our preaching need not put a premium on credulity. Faith has more roots, and stronger ones, even in the keenest sceptic. Can anybody familiar with civilised man be ignorant of this? Is there any minister whose experience has not told him that, as a rule, the danger lies in the opposite direction: for lack of what is genuine, men put their faith in what is false.

Several. [*In subdued voices.*] That is true.

Bratt. If a miracle appeared among us—one so great that "all who saw it, believed"—? First of all, the vast millions would come running—those who live in need and are full of longing—those who are dissatisfied, and oppressed, and suffering, and hungering for justice.—If they were to hear that the Kingdom of God, in the ancient sense, had once more descended upon the earth—no matter where it be—then, weeping and rejoicing—yes, even if the greater number of them should know themselves in danger of dying on the way—why, they would rather die on that way than go on living on any other! Then they would crawl forth, each one out of his own town, his own hut, his own bed—the sick ones in the lead—to see the Lord revealed. But they would not be the only ones. All seekers after truth on this earth would follow them. First of all, those whose craving for truth is greatest—all profound, serious thinkers, all noble minds. *Their* eagerness would be the most beautiful to behold; their faith, of most importance. It is neither the craving for truth nor the faculty of believing that is lacking in them: it is the miracle!—All demand certainty and peace in regard to life's greatest problems. Even the thoughtless, and those who have put such problems aside as useless or futile. All of them, without exception, have been brought up to long for more than knowledge—that is, for something in which to believe. But first of all you must furnish them with a guarantee!—a guarantee that what you preach is true! If they see *this*, then they will also believe in what they do *not* see.—That's the way it has been from the beginning. Those who now will be satisfied with less—with personal experience alone—they are like Mohammedans and Jews and Buddhists. These, too—all of them—appeal to their own personal experience. But what is lacking is the guarantee that such experiences are universally valid. And it is *this* that I am seeking! For it has been promised us!—O God, my God, now comes the final test!

Bishop. Bratt, Bratt!

Bratt. The *final* test. For further struggle is beyond my strength. I shall resign from the ministry—resign from the Church and from the faith—if, if, if——! [*He bursts into tears again.*]

Bishop. My dear son! You mustn't——

Bratt. No, don't speak to me—I beg you! Help me to pray instead! For if the miracle be not here, it cannot be anywhere! This man is more than other men; he is the noblest one the earth has borne. A faith like his nobody has ever seen. Nor was there ever seen a faith like that aroused by his faith.

All. It is true!

Bratt. And it is easy to understand. He was wealthy when he came here. He has given all away. The number of times he has risked his life to bring help to others cannot be counted. The miracles which he is believed to have worked are equally numberless. But just because they were so many, I could not believe in them.

Several. [*In low voices.*] That's just what happened to me!

Bratt. Perhaps the right thing would have been to think the very opposite? That here exists what really is meant by "faith"? That the essence of faith *is* the miracle? That it must work miracles? Perhaps that is how we should have thought of it?—And whatsoever our thoughts should have been—we should not have regarded him with that professional scepticism which, I am sorry to say, was shown by myself. His love and his faith should have made me humble. I have to accuse myself, and in my heart I am sincerely asking his pardon.

All the Ministers. [*Without exception.*] I also! I also!

Bratt. We know no better man; there is no stronger faith than his: suppose the miracle were found here?

[*General emotion.*]

Jensen. [*In a whisper.*] Look at the cross above the door! Is it the evening sun—or what is it?

Bratt. I don't know. But you may be sure that if we meet the miracle, then the meeting will be attended by thousands unseen by us. If only it be granted *us* to be there!—If only it be granted us to be there! Think of it: to witness something so great that "all who see it, believe!" And *we* were to witness such a thing—you, and you, and I? It is too much! It cannot be possible!—But if it prove possible—then there can be no one else in our day, brethren—oh, full of shortcomings, and lacking in faith, lacking in love, as we are——

All. Yes, yes——!

Bratt. Then, in spite of all, there can be none on whom grace has been more richly bestowed; then we, unworthy ones, must be es-

pecially chosen! [*Deep general emotion.*]—And as I look out upon this hemmed-in, barren land of the fiords, with the screaming gulls overhead, and as the thought comes to me, that the Kingdom of God began in the luxuriant regions of countries steeped in sun, through which ran the highroads of the world: what a proof it would be to see it resumed, in all its grandeur, in a poverty-stricken, outlying corner like this, on the edge of the everlasting ice——

Falk. [*Gets up, pale as death, and whispers.*] Yes, yes!

Several. Yes, yes!

Bratt. Then it seems to me that everything fits together, and that the miracle *must* come. [*All are now on their feet.*]

Bishop. [*In a low voice.*] Oh, that it would come, so that I might see it in my old age!

Blank. Yes, if only the great faith would seize us! Not because we have deserved to see; but because we need it!

[*He falls on his knees; others follow his example.*]

Bratt. Because the whole race needs it! More than at any other time. Because it has been promised. Because here it must be, if it be anywhere. [*He kneels.*] His faith must be able to reach it! There is no greater faith than his on earth! And faith can do it! Oh, it can!

All. It can, it can!

Bratt. If it couldn't—then the whole thing would be impossible. Then there would be no truth in the rest either. Then there would be something excessive in all of it—something beyond our power——

Scene Five

Rachel. [*Is heard calling in a scared voice from the room on the right.*] Elias! [*Immediately afterward she enters in great haste through the door on the right and runs across the room to the window, which she flings open, and she cries out with all her might.*] Elias! [*Thereupon she throws herself backward so that she would fall if she were not caught by* Kröyer; *she bursts into violent weeping, but struggles to her feet again and points toward the other room in evident terror.*] There! In there! She is no longer alone!—See—don't you see! [*All have risen; at that moment* Elias *appears on the porch; as she catches sight of him,* Rachel *tears herself loose from* Kröyer *and runs to meet her brother, crying.*] Mother! Mother!

Elias. Has she risen?

Rachel. Yes, yes.

Elias. And she walks?

Rachel. Yes! But she is not alone!

Elias. This must be told!

Rachel. But not to father!

Elias. No—from the roof, from the belfry—it must be rung out to the whole world! [*He runs out.*]

Rachel. But you have no ladder! [*As he fails to reply, she repeats in alarm.*] You have no ladder, don't you hear?

Kröyer. [*Makes a silencing gesture and says in a low voice.*] Hush!

Bishop. [*Whispering.*] Oh, listen!

Sang. [*Is heard singing in the church*]:

Alleluia, alleluia!
Alleluia, alleluia!

All. [*Kneel down, whispering.*] He knows it! He knows it!

[*At that moment* Clara *appears in a white night-dress; her eyes are turned toward the church; she stops and reaches out her arms as if to meet the song.*]

All the Ministers. [*Singing very softly*]:

Alleluia, alleluia!
Alleluia, alleluia!

Rachel. [*In the porch.*] Now father is at the church door.

Sang. [*His voice is now heard strong and clear*]:

Alleluia, alleluia!
Alleluia, alleluia!

[*The church bell begins to ring, and all the people outside join in the singing. There is a triumphant force in their song as if it sprang from a thousand throats. It is increasing in strength, for the people who were in the groves come running to join those at the church. For a while it seems as if the "alleluias" would lift the house off its foundations.*

Sang *appears in the doorway. His face is lighted up by the rays of the evening sun. All rise and fall back. He holds out both arms toward* Clara, *who is standing in the middle of the room. Her arms are stretched out in response. Then he goes to her and takes her in his arms.*

All around them the song is pouring forth. The room is full of people, and so is the porch; some have climbed up on the shoulders of those

in front of them, and others are standing on the window-sill.

Then CLARA *collapses in her husband's arms. The song dies out. Only the bell is still heard.*

CLARA *makes an effort to rise up again, but succeeds only in raising her head so that her eyes can meet his.*]

Clara. Light flowed from you—when you came—oh, my beloved! [*Her head sinks back, her arms lose their hold, her entire body collapses.*]

Sang. [*Still holding her, puts a hand over her heart; then he bends over her body in surprise; finally he looks up toward the sky, saying with childlike innocence.*] But this was not the meaning of it—? [*He sinks down on one knee and puts* CLARA'S *head on the other; once more he searches for signs of life; then he lets the body gently sink to the floor; and rising to his feet, he looks up again as he says.*] But this was not the meaning of it—? Or—? Or——?

[*He puts his hand to his heart and sinks down on the floor.* RACHEL *has been standing as if turned into stone; now a wild cry breaks over her lips as she sinks on her knees beside the bodies of her parents.*]

Kröyer. What did he mean—by that word —"or——"?

Bratt. I don't know with certainty. But it killed him.

Rachel. Dead?—It is impossible!

[*The bell continues to ring.*]

THE END

PHANTASMS

(I FANTASMI)

By ROBERTO BRACCO

Translated from the Italian by DIRCE ST. CYR.

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ROBERTO BRACCO AND HIS PLAYS

Roberto Bracco, the author of *Phantasms,* was born in Naples in 1862, and first won fame by his poems and sketches. Afterwards he wrote one-act plays, and, finally, the long plays that have given him his distinguished position in modern Italian drama. He is generally regarded in Italy as the best stylist among the modern prose dramatists of that country. But although Bracco is undoubtedly a dramatist of great ability, it must not be forgotten, in considering his relative rank, that Italy's most distinctive achievement in drama has not been in the field of prose realism but in that of poetry and romance—in such work as that of D'Annunzio, Sem Benelli, Niccodemi, and others; and that her prose realistic drama has not yet equalled that of Russia, Germany, France, Spain, and England.

The influence of Ibsen is strongly felt in Bracco's technique, as is also the influence of the French realistic dramatists of the day. Like Ibsen, too, Bracco is primarily a realist and a dramatist of ideas. Unlike Ibsen, however (but like virtually all other Italian realistic dramatists), he scarcely sees society as a unit, and does not seem interested in the problems that characterize it as a whole. He is the dramatist of individuals, of families, and, at most, of groups. His thirty-two plays include light comedies, social problem plays, psychological plays, and tragedies, of which the best are the psychological plays. In these the problems are personal, and are especially those of women—women laboring under inhibitions, struggling for a happiness that is forever denied them, largely by forces within themselves. Such plays are *Phantasms, The Hidden Spring,* and *Maternity.*

From this it is apparent that Bracco is primarily and when at his best a dramatist of the inner life. He is subtle in his psychological searchings, probing deep, following with marvelous insight, patience, and even sympathy the wanderings of unsettled and tortured souls through the mists created by their own weaknesses and mistakes, by their own inhibitions and fears. Though not devoid of pity, he is, in general, a pessimist, who perceives and clearly depicts the evil but finds no cure for it; whose work abounds in negations but provides little that is constructive and positive. And all this is accomplished with a technique remarkably subtle and adroit. The mere fact that Bracco's stories, at least in his psychological plays, are those of the inner life and that his situations are psychological rather than physical, renders all the more remarkable the tense interest which these plays excite in the auditor or reader. They suggest at every moment a powerful stream of feeling that runs underneath a comparatively calm surface, a terrible conflict of the spirit more tense than any physical expression can portray.

Several of Bracco's plays have been produced in America, the most successful being *The Unfaithful Woman* (*L'Infedele*), which appeared under the title *Countess Coquette*. *Phantasms* is characteristic of Bracco's interest in the psychology of women, especially of those suffering from inhibitions that strangle their happiness. In treating such a subject Bracco shows himself a student of modern psychology, which seeks, and sometimes finds, the very springs of motive, and helps to explain actions otherwise inexplicable, such as that of the heroine of this play. Out of the struggle within her is created a drama all the more significant in that it deals entirely with the inner life.

Phantasms was first produced in November, 1906, in Naples, by the Compagnia Stabile di Roma. Apparently, there has been no production of the play in either England or America.

CHARACTERS

PROFESSOR RAYMOND ARTUNNI
JULIA, *his wife*
MADAM MARNIERI
LUCIANO, *her son*
MADAM GILBERTA MIRELLI
THE MARCHIONESS ANTONUCCI
ADALGISA
DONNA SOPHIA
FAUSTINA
SISTER ELISABETH
AN OLD WOMAN
MANLIO, ROBERT, ALMERICO, PAOLO, ERNEST — *Professor Raymond Artunni's disciples*
SEVERAL OTHER DISCIPLES
JOSEPH, *the Professor's old servant*

The action takes place in Italy at the present day

PHANTASMS

ACT ONE

A parlor in Doctor Raymond Artunni's *country house. The room is furnished with austere elegance, almost as solemn as an ancient house. It seems almost like a room in an ancient castle. The furniture also gives you that impression. On the right side there is a table, on which stands a vase containing a few flowers, some books, a hand-bell. Near the table an arm-chair covered with dark leather. Up stage center, the general entrance, opening into a small parlor. On the right side of this door, a window; opening on the garden a door, on both sides, left and right.*

Scene One

The old servant Joseph, Manlio, Luciano

Joseph [*looking quite worried*]. Please be seated. As I said before, I am afraid I shall not be able to announce you to the doctor.

Manlio. If the Doctor cannot see us, then do announce us to his wife.

Joseph. I shall do so. Whom shall I announce?

Manlio. What? [*Pointing to* Luciano]. Have you even forgotten Mr. Luciano Marnieri?

Joseph. No, I do remember him.

Manlio. Then his name is sufficient. I shall remain in obscurity.

Luciano. But I beg your pardon, why do you send in my name?

Manlio [*mockingly*]. Good gracious! 'Why do you send in my name?' You have always been his favorite assistant, of course then he will not refuse to see us.

Luciano. I came here with you to please my companions, not on my own account.

Manlio. What does that mean?

Luciano. I know what it means!

Manlio [*quickly to the servant*]. All right. Please tell the Doctor Artunni that 'two pupils of his wish to see him.' Nothing else.

Joseph [*slowly goes to the door on the left, opens it with caution, and immediately closes it after him. Exit.*]

Luciano [*to* Manlio]. I think it is useless to speak to her. Let us go and try again some other time.

Manlio. Go now, after announcing ourselves? You must be crazy! It would be very impolite.

Luciano [*makes a gesture as if yielding*].

Joseph [*entering again*]. Mrs. Artunni will see you in a few minutes. [*Slowly exit from the center door.*]

Manlio. That poor old man is suffering from hypochondria! The air of the country does not agree with him. Have you noticed that every one around here looks so sad? What's the trouble with all the people?

Luciano [*in a dreamy way, approaches the window, and contemplates the view*].

Manlio. Did you not notice also that pretty country woman, down in the garden, who looked so healthy, yet so sad? She was lying down on the straw, holding the tail of a pig that wanted to run away. She looked like Ariadne at the moment when Theseus was abandoning her. When I said to her: 'Hello, my pretty girl, is this Dr. Artunni's house?' Her answer, 'Yes sir,' was so sad that it made me shiver. In order to see her smile, I asked her name. You know how all the country girls are pleased when you ask them their names? But she was not. In the same sorrowful manner she said 'Caroline.' [*Pause.*] What are you looking so attentively at?

Luciano. Nothing.

Manlio. Do you see our companions?

Luciano [*in an absent-minded way*]. No. [*Steps aside in order to let* Manlio *look out from the window.*]

Manlio. Yes, we can see them! There they are sitting on the grass like pasturing sheep! Did you hear what Robert promised us? . . . If he fails to find a four-leaf clover, he will invite all of us to lunch. I'll wager we won't. That boy is so

lucky that no doubt he will find a five-leaf one instead! I must tell you. . . .

[*Enter* JULIA *from left, immediately closing the door after her with caution.*]

SCENE TWO

MANLIO, LUCIANO, JULIA

Luciano [*who was looking at that side, seeing Julia enter, immediately pulls* MANLIO'S *coat to stop him. Timidly, bows respectfully*]. Madam—

Manlio [*turning quickly, also bowing low, but in a vivacious manner*]. Mrs. Artunni.

Julia [*bowing just a little coolly*]. What can I do for you?

Manlio. You have of course recognized our illustrious Doctor Luciano Marnieri. [*to* LUCIANO]. Why don't you thank me for calling you illustrious? [*To* JULIA.] For a year he was the right hand of your husband, and of course you were obliged to bear his company for a year. But I am sure you have forgotten the name and the face of this tattler [*pointing to himself*].

Julia [*seriously*]. Not the face, but you must excuse me if I don't remember all the names of my husband's pupils.

Manlio [*introducing himself*]. Manlio Andenzi, doctor of medicine, who was graduated years ago, and I believe for life.

Luciano. Don't annoy madam with your jokes, but tell her the object of our visit.

Manlio. Why don't you speak?

Luciano [*interrupting him*]. Manlio, I beg of you!

Manlio. Of course it would be useless! I am the orator, and I hope Mrs. Artunni will forgive my good humor, because, you see, to-day is a holiday for us! You must have understood, Madam,—we are here to see the doctor. And there are quite a few of us. We two represent the vanguard, the whole regiment is outside—pasturing—we have only to give the signal, and in a body they will attack the castle. Our first idea was to come all together and surprise him. Then we changed our minds, and decided to be more prudent. We reasoned thus: 'The doctor, after all, is away in the country with his wife, to enjoy these beautiful spring days, therefore we must not be too indiscreet.' I am not joking now, I am quite serious. We, his pupils, all know how the Doctor Artunni adores you. Is it not strange that such a serious, austere man as he is could yet be so timid and try to dissimulate his love for you like a young boy out of school? Perhaps it was this very ingenuity that won our devotion entirely [*trying to joke again*]. All this, of course, is all right, but because he adores his wife we should not be deprived of him. Why did he abandon us? Why did he leave his chair in the university? Why did he leave his pupils, as he used to call us? What for? Only to come over here and bury himself in the country? To do what? Play the—farmer?

Luciano [*severely*]. Manlio!

Manlio. Let me talk. It is better that I should unburden myself before we see him, especially as I have the pleasure of speaking to Madam Artunni, who, I am sure, will help us out. [*To* JULIA *seriously.*] A noble woman like you must feel very sorry that a genius like your husband should give up his mission. Am I not right in hoping that you will influence him to return to us?

Julia [*with her back turned, she has been listening to the light and serious talk of* MANLIO, *trying to control her emotion, but at his last words she decides to break the silence*]. I see that you and your companions do not know anything about him.

Luciano [*noticing her emotion*]. What?

Manlio. You scare us!

Julia. Poor Raymond is so ill that, even if he would, he could never go back to you.

Luciano [*becomes very pale*].

Manlio [*astonished*]. When did he become ill?

Julia. I don't know! He hid it for a long time, even from me. I believe he never told any one of it in order to keep me in total ignorance of it. Only a year ago, before deciding to retire to this old country house, he told me he had incurable tuberculosis. You remember for a month he never went out. When you called on him he would try to be gay. And if some one noticed that he was getting tired, he would immediately reassure him it was only overwork. But just after this he told me the truth. And now every day repeats it to me that there is no hope.

Luciano [*tries to control his emotion*]. [*Pause.*]

Manlio. I am sure there must be some exaggeration. You are so devoted to him that, unwittingly, you are exaggerating, or unconsciously encouraging his exaggeration. And he—yes, it is true—is one of our best physicians, yet he is so nervous, so suggestive —— But how can he have the same perception, when it regards himself?

Julia. Yet he examines and studies himself in such an exacting manner that it would frighten you.

Manlio. But the necessary calm for taking care of himself ——

Julia. The intense desire to prolong his life is worth more to him than calm.

Manlio. Yet we should ask the advice of some specialists. We should have a consultation—I don't know —— But we should do something. Shouldn't we, Luciano? Yes, we must.

Luciano [*looks aghast, cannot utter a word*]

Julia. I begged him so much to do so.

Manlio. We shall impose upon him the advice of his best colleagues.

Julia. You shall see he will not listen to them; at any rate, there is no more hope now.

Manlio. Can you believe it, Luciano? Can you? And all of us came here to scold him, but to express our everlasting enthusiasm. [*To* Julia.] Do tell us, Mrs. Artunni, will he be able to see us? We should like to present our respects, see him, but if you fear or if you think it is not the proper moment ——

Julia. I should think he would be pleased to see his pupils. At all events it would help him morally.

Manlio. Is he in bed?

Julia. At this moment he is asleep, because he had a restless night. Generally he is either shut up in his studio working, or he goes around the house, in an active, agitated, but energetic manner, that to look at him, one would not believe his condition so grave. It is a remarkable phenomenon.

Manlio. Why a remarkable phenomenon? I maintain, instead, that if he is able to expend so much vitality, there is not so much danger as he thinks.

Julia. I don't know!

Manlio. We are going back to tell everything to our companions. They will indeed be sorry! In half an hour we shall all return. Then, if he cannot see us, we shall come back some other time. After you have told him that we are here, you shall yourself decide what we must do. We are entirely at your disposal, and you must rely upon us as if we were—may I say it—brothers ——

Julia. I thank you.

Manlio. Please do go now, he might be awake.

Julia. No, if he were awake, he would certainly have called me. [*Taking leave.*] Will you excuse me?

Manlio. We shall see you soon.

Luciano [*bows without looking at her, and without being able to pronounce a word*].

Julia [*exits from left door, being careful to open and close it without making any noise*].

Scene Three

Manlio, Luciano

Manlio [*putting his hand on his forehead*]. I feel as if I were dreaming! We had no warning! Absolutely no warning! [*With a hopeless gesture.*] But it is so! We cannot doubt it any more! Let us go, Luciano.

Luciano [*trying to control his deep emotion*]. Yes, Manlio [*takes a few steps, then suddenly stops*].

Manlio. Well?

Luciano. Wait a moment. Let me compose myself a little. That news has ——

Manlio. I know perfectly how you feel about it. He was very kind to you [*both deeply moved*].

Luciano. Don't you think it would be better to tell our companions not to disturb that poor unfortunate?

Manlio. But his wife said that perhaps our visit might be of some assistance to him.

Luciano. What! To almost oblige him to see us? To almost make him own up that there is no more hope, that he has only a few months, a few days to live? It would indeed be cruel!

Manlio. Excuse me, but why did you not express your opinion a few minutes ago, when his wife was here? Instead, you did not say a word, not even to express your sympathy ——

Luciano. I was so upset——

Manlio. Now, my boy, we can't retract! Courage, Luciano, don't let us lose any more time! All our companions are acting as schoolboys on a holiday, adorning themselves with flowers, not knowing anything, they come here in a kind of procession so as to surprise us. Their gaiety would indeed be out of place now.

Luciano. But remember I shall not come back with all of you.

Manlio. More reason, then, to go away at once.

Luciano. Yet I should like—at least to justify myself with his wife.

Manlio. Let me tell you frankly you have made a very stupid resolution.

Luciano. Manlio, I have not the courage to see him so ill. I haven't the courage to remain here to look and listen to him, thinking that shortly he will go.

Manlio. This sensitiveness of yours borders upon weakness.

Luciano [*quickly, yet submissively*]. No, no! Manlio! It is not weakness! No, but only a matter of conscience!

Manlio [*surprised*]. Conscience!

Luciano. The worst part of it is that though I feel I should not venture to see him, because I know I shall not have the courage to face him, yet a supernatural force keeps me here, body and soul, and I feel absolutely compelled to speak to him, to throw myself at his feet.

Manlio [*more surprised*]. The reason?

Luciano. I don't know——

Manlio. You don't know it? [*Pause.*]

Luciano [*stretching out his arm, nervously*]. Manlio!

Manlio [*frightened*]. Luciano?

Luciano [*in a low voice, trembling*]. You always believed me a good man, did you not?

Manlio. The best of men.

Luciano. And if I were a scoundrel instead?

Manlio. Don't say foolish things! There is no relation between your words and the actual facts.

Luciano [*approaching him, almost touching* MANLIO'S *face, much excited*]. Do you wish to know the true meaning of my words? Will you be shocked? Will you despise me?

Manlio. Be calm. Remember where we are.

Luciano [*going on talking, frantically, but with stifling voice*]. When Mrs. Artunni told us of her husband's mortal sickness, a brutally selfish thought flashed into my mind.

Manlio. What are you raving about?

Luciano. For a long time I have been fighting against a hopeless passion, and at that moment I felt its cupidity.

Manlio [*astonished*]. Are you in love with her?

Luciano. Yes, yes! And I thought that perhaps—his death—would have permitted——

Manlio [*interrupting him, and putting his hand in front of his mouth so as to stop him*]. No! I don't want to listen to you! [*Then almost trembling.*] And Mrs. Artunni?

Luciano [*quickly, emphatically*]. Nothing! Nothing! Never a word, never a look of encouragement.

Manlio. Then you have lost all your good sense.

Luciano. All this is a mystery to me also. I spent my first youth finding pleasure only in my thoughts, never thinking about women. When I met her I felt like a blind man who sees the light for the first time. And since that time I have lived like one possessed. I cannot say anything more.

Manlio. And now—you wished to justify yourself, so that she may guess?

Luciano [*covering his face with both hands*]. To have become a scoundrel to such a point, no! If I had not been so disgusted with myself, do you think I should have had the impulse to tell you?

Manlio. Now, you shall go with me. And in order not to let him suspect anything, you shall come back with us. You shall fulfil your duty to the last. We will think about the future, later on. You must go far away from this house, from this city, to a strange country, so you will overcome all the dangers.

Luciano [*firmly*]. I swear to you I shall do what you say!

Manlio [*a little frightened*]. I hear her voice! Quick! If she met you now I should be afraid that your emotion might betray you.

Luciano. Don't help to make me lose faith in my honesty!

Manlio [*quickly taking his arm*]. Come with me! Come!

Luciano. Yes, yes!

[*Both exit center door,* MANLIO *pushing* LUCIANO. *The conversation from 'Now, you shall go with me,' till 'Yes, yes,' must be delivered very quickly.*]

[*The scene remains empty for a second.*]

SCENE FOUR

JULIA, RAYMOND, JOSEPH

Julia [*enters from left, quickly, as if she were looking for a refuge*]. It is absolute torture! Absolute torture! [*Crying, but without tears.*] [*A silence.*]

Raymond [*enters from left, pale, agitated, stops and holds himself to a chair*].

Julia [*seeing him, stops crying, and looks at him*]. [*Another silence.*]

Raymond [*calmly*]. You ran away?

Julia [*gently nods her head*].

Raymond. You came here to cry?

Julia. Yes—it is true, I wanted to cry.

Raymond. Why?

Julia. Because [*sweetly*]—in your words, in your looks, there is always that same suspicion! You wake up with the same thoughts with which you go to sleep. Always questioning, searching, and looking at me in that strange manner. Does it surprise you that sometimes I feel like crying?

Raymond. There is no reason why you should hide, though.

Julia. I am hiding only my tears from you.

Raymond. Even if I don't see them I know I am tormenting you. [*Pause.*] Poor woman! How I make you suffer!

Julia. No, I am only grieved at your suffering.

Raymond. But does not this terrible inquisition to which I expose you make you suffer?

Julia. Yes, but the worst part is that this inquisition of yours makes me so nervous that I am unable to nurse you, with that serenity of mind which is so necessary.

[*Pause.*]

Raymond. And I know it will be so till the end! Now that I feel the catastrophe approaching I had made up my mind to remain quiet, and spare you this horrible ordeal. I wanted to give you the illusion that I was free from the terrible clutches of this untamable jealousy. This illusion would not only have been beneficial to you, but also would have spared me this agonized suffering. You would have alleviated my last moments with your sincere kindness, whereas now you will feel bitterly towards me. Not even the assurance of the benefit I was expecting from my little deceitfulness has had the power to cure me of this frenzy. The nearer the end approaches, the worse my suspicion becomes. I shall torment you, Julia, to the last, and when the fatal moment arrives and I ask your indulgence, your pity, you will be right then if you curse me.

Julia. No, dearest; if you have made me suffer, it was because you loved me too much, therefore all my life I shall pity you.

Raymond. For the sake of that pity don't oppose my foolish need of searching into your soul, because this horrible thirst of inquisition is consuming me more than the consumption. Anyhow, there is no more hope of curing my jealousy. I was jealous of you the very first day I married you, when you were only an innocent girl. During these ten years of our union you have been the most affectionate, patient, perfect wife, nevertheless I never ceased to be jealous of you. I have oppressed you, watched you, and sometimes even kept you like a prisoner. Did I believe you capable of deceiving me? No. Had I perhaps some suspicion? No! No! I assure you, no! But the really jealous man, Julia, does not wait for denunciation, for calumny, or for any other proof of treason to feel the necessity of mistrusting the woman whom he loves. Whoever believes that a mere suspicion may arouse jealousy does not indeed know this horrible disease. Jealousy starts in the hearts of those who have the instinct for it, and it comes about the same time as love! And then it becomes tyrannical, monstrous, unbounded, especially if it is a true, deep love.

Julia. But should not ten years of faithfulness put an end to your suspicions?

Raymond. You saw me—saw your mother's doctor and benefactor. When she died,

you married me, because I wanted to save you from all the dangers and poverty. I recognize your faithfulness, but it came through gratitude, which sentiment resembles love least. Tell me, do you know precisely how unfaithfulness starts? It begins by surrendering, by falling, by abandoning our body entirely, and by feeling the weight of our sacrifice. It begins by the brutal infraction of our duty or by our inner perturbation, which often will not hear even the cry of our conscience. You don't know all this, and even if you knew it, you would perhaps prefer not to say it. But what is annoying me now is not the past nor the present. While I live, you will not deceive me. That's settled. But—after?

Julia [*surprised and frightened*]. What are you thinking now?

Raymond [*much agitated*]. After? After? This is a new torment worse than the one I had to bear during these ten years. The vision of death has imposed upon me a new fear, which will make me suffer agony to the end.

Julia [*energetically, yet sadly, interrupting him*]. For Heaven's sake, Raymond, try to overcome this new idea, or both of us will become insane.

Raymond [*approaching her, quite agitated*]. How can I overcome this, when whatever you may assure me makes no material effect upon me, as we do not control our future?

Julia. You never suspected I would lie to you. Never! Never! From the very first day of our union we excluded the probability of lying to each other, and the sincere exchange of our thoughts has been and still is the refuge of our souls, the only comfort of our poor unhappy home.

Raymond. But what comfort will I find in your sincerity of yesterday? And that of to-day? You say now you are mine for Eternity? I'll admit it, I'll believe it, I will not doubt that to-day you cannot understand not being just as much bound to my memory after my death as you have been to me during my life! But may not a change or transformation take place in your heart some day? May not some temptations, which you will have to face after my death have an influence over you?

Julia. For those who do not look for temptations there are none.

Raymond. You will not be tempted, will you?

Julia. Never, Raymond!

Raymond. But temptation will follow you, and perhaps prevent you from being strong. In order to resist the world's temptation one should be blind, deaf, you should not possess a woman's sensibility, you should not have any nerves, nor any blood —Oh! How lonely I see you in this terrible struggle. Already I can imagine myself looking at you from my tomb. [*Pressing his chest as if almost wishing to tear it to pieces.*] How I am suffering! What pain I have here!

Julia [*desperately*]. Oh, Raymond, dearest, stop raving like this.

Raymond [*excited*]. I would sell my soul if that gave me the assurance of never being deceived. [*Sits in an armchair quite exhausted.*]

Julia [*sitting also, quite discouraged*]. Dear me! Dear me!

[*A long silence.*]

Joseph [*enters from center, and stops on the threshold, and calls softly*]. Madam! [*Pause. Then a little louder.*] Madam!

Julia [*turning to him*]. Well, Joseph?

Joseph [*advances a little,* JULIA *going to him*].

Joseph [*in a low voice*]. Those two gentlemen who came here this morning are back with their friends.

Julia [*hesitating and speaking in a low voice*]. I don't know how it——

Joseph. I shall tell them to wait a while.

Julia. Yes, Joseph, ask them to wait.

[JOSEPH *exit.*]

Raymond [*who has seen* JULIA *talking with* JOSEPH, *but has not heard the conversation, asks abruptly*]. What did Joseph want?

Julia. Your pupils—as I told you—had expressed the desire to pay you their respects. They are outside, waiting for an answer.

Raymond [*firmly*]. I shall not receive them. [*Pause.*] Their presence here in my house would—humiliate me more. It seems to me it is a bad omen. [*With tears in his eyes.*] They, like you, will outlive me——

Julia. They love you.

Raymond. No matter! They have all

the enthusiasm of their youth, which to my eyes is the most attractive thing, but now has become my enemy! Yes, Julia, it will be youth which will tempt you and put you to the test. Youth loves and is loved [*crying*].

Julia. Raymond! [*Embracing, kissing him and crying with him.*] Raymond!

Raymond. Yes, kiss me, embrace me—cry with me. It helps me. [*Drying his eyes.*] You see it is better that you cry without hiding your tears? I'll become more sensible. For instance, now, I must not be so hard on those poor boys. Not only shall I welcome them, but I shall entertain them with many interesting subjects which I have intended to communicate to them for some time.

Julia [*goes towards center door*].

Raymond [*seeing her go, suddenly stops her*]. No, not you. I shall ask Joseph to show them in.

Julia [*stops*].

Raymond [*rings the bell, which is on the table*].

Joseph [*appearing again, and remaining on the threshold*]. I am here, sir.

[*Pause.*]

Raymond [*to* Julia, *timidly, as he fears to be understood*]. Are you not going to your room?

Julia [*timidly*]. Yes, Raymond. [*Going.*]

Raymond. And are you going like that?

Julia [*approaching him again, kisses his forehead, and then slowly exit through the door on the left*].

Raymond [*follows her with the corner of his eyes, then turning to* Joseph, *and trying to be calm, says*]. Joseph—tell those young men they may come in.

[Joseph *exit center.*]

ACT TWO

Scene One

Raymond and His Disciples

[*Raymond is still seated in an armchair near the table. All his disciples, about a dozen of them, are standing in front of him.* Luciano, *who remains apart from the others, pale and embarrassed, hardly glances at* Raymond. *All the others look solemn and sad, but they give the impression of being intensely interested in what* Raymond *has just told them. Their solemnity is in contrast with their gay spring suits. They all wear flowers in their buttonholes, and some of them even have some grass sticking out of their pockets.*]

Raymond [*must give the impression that he has been talking vivaciously, and has suddenly stopped to take breath*].

All the others [*remain in silence, hoping he will continue*].

Raymond. Give me a few moments of rest.

Paul [*kindly*]. Doctor, you should not speak so much, it will hurt you.

Raymond. I assure you no.

Robert [*aside to the others*]. It is so close here that he can hardly breathe. There are too many of us in the room.

Almerico. Shall we open the window?

Raymond. Yes, open it. Let me also enjoy this beautiful spring day. [*Looking at them.*] I see you have adorned yourselves with spring flowers.

[*One of the disciples goes to open the window. A brief silence.*]

Raymond [*breathing the fresh air, and at last feeling well again, goes on talking*]. I was telling you that by my will I make you my heirs——

Manlio [*daring to interrupt him*]. But why speak of these things to-day? You are still energetic. There's so much life in you yet! One can see by your looks that your energy will not be exhausted either to-morrow or in a month or in a year!

Raymond. My dear Manlio, I am afraid the end is coming soon. I know it. To-day must be our farewell. To-day, when I still enjoy the full power of my reasonings, must dispose of my little scientific treasure. Perhaps I could not do it to-morrow. There [*pointing to the right door*], in my studio, you will find on the desk a very large manuscript. Bring it here.

Manlio. All right [*slowly goes out from the right door, and immediately returns with the manuscript, which he hands to the professor in a very respectful way, then returns to his place*].

Raymond [*showing it to his disciples*]. Here it is [*putting it on the table*]. Boys, listen to me. Not often has a doctor the privilege of studying in himself one of the most serious illnesses which afflicts our humanity. I have therefore taken advan-

tage of this opportunity and made many important discoveries. No man ever felt the necessity of prolonging his life as I do, and no man ever delayed its end with so much animosity as I did. I owe to this animosity all the precious researches which I have been able to make, and the discovery of tried remedies. For a long time I was able to conquer the illness which was constantly attacking me in different ways. But I tell you truly, if I had not had to fight against its continual violence, my victory would have been complete. [*A brief silence.*] In this manuscript, which I confide to you, is the fruit of all my strange studies [*sadly*] that I made on my poor, ruined body, hoping it will be the means of curing a thousand others. You who are young, vigorous, talented, devoted, will you assume the task of utilizing my inheritance to the profit of those that suffer? [*Waiting for an answer.*] No one answers? Ah, this grieves me.

Manlio. This silence, professor, is only caused by our devotion to you. I am only a poor fool, who dared to call himself 'your disciple.' All my companions think the same. The great love we feel for you does not admit, nor will admit, that you are going to abandon us forever. You speak to us with the same serenity with which our dearest dead would talk to us from a distant world. But we are near you, looking and listening to a man whose perfect vitality we still admire, therefore we cannot believe that we shall soon separate from each other. No doubt every word you uttered becomes instantly our best thought and we feel as if something really yours was diffusing in us. This is our answer, professor.

[*All are quite moved; and some even control their tears.* Manlio *dries a tear with his handkerchief.*]

Luciano [*more agitated than the others, tries to hide himself behind his companions*].

Raymond. No, boys, don't. If you only knew the effort I am making, now, so as to accomplish for the last time my mission, if you could understand the prodigy I am achieving, so as not to hear the wails of the hurricane raging over the remains of my existence, you would not shed any tears. No, I am not asking tears from my disciples, but a solemn promise given by honest men who stick to their duty and to me.

Paul. Yes, professor; we do promise it.

Ernest. We promise we shall be worthy of your confidence.

Robert. In your name we shall be proud to help humanity.

Raymond. And—you will not refuse me, I hope, a little gratitude——

Robert. Our most profound gratitude, an eternal gratitude——

Raymond. Will you go on loving me, just the same as if I were with you, still alive, and much devoted to all of you? You will still go on respecting me, won't you?

Robert. To veneration, professor!

Raymond. All of you? All? [*Looks at them.*]

The disciples. [*All answering solemnly and sincerely.*] All of us

[*Only* Luciano *has not answered, he seems paralyzed.*]

Raymond. [*Rises slowly and then, as if acting by inspiration, approaches one by one his disciples, and looks at them in silence.*]

[Luciano *is the last of the disciples, and he is obliged to look straight into the professor's eyes.*]

Raymond [*with a certain presentiment, murmurs to himself*]. Yet—who knows!

Robert [*sadly*]. Are you doubting us, professor?

Raymond. Why should I doubt you? I find in you only kindness.

Robert. Then?

Raymond. I was only thinking that human kindness is, after all, a very limited thing, compared with the demands that one man makes upon another. [*Sitting again.*] But all this should not worry you, I rely on your promise, and when the day comes [*pointing to* Luciano] you shall receive a copy of my work. Our friendship will be strengthened by this fact which will keep us united, even when I shall be gone. Now it only remains to make our farewells.

Manlio. But we, professor, wish to help you, to cure you. We shall not give that up! If it annoys you to have so many people all at once around you, we shall take our turns, each hour——

Ernest. Yes, and we shall not disturb you.

Raymond. I appreciate your offer, but do permit me not to accept it. My wife is so attentive, so vigilant, that any other assistance would be superfluous.

Ernest. Perhaps our help will not be superfluous to her.

Robert. The presence of some one who cares for you might give her more courage. Manlio and Luciano, who preceded us, said that they found her suffering and quite tired. Induce him, Luciano, you who always have been so intimate with the doctor, to accept our offer.

Luciano [*obliged to speak against his will, and almost without understanding what he is saying*]. It seems to me—that if the professor does not ——

Raymond. At last I hear your voice, Luciano! You've not spoken a word, you have been hiding yourself.

Manlio [*interrupting quickly*]. Because he was much more upset than we. He had for a year been working by your side, participating in all your anxieties and being treated like a son. Naturally, the news of your illness was a shock to him, and he is quite desolate.

Raymond. Come here, Luciano, let me embrace you.

[LUCIANO *approaches him with downcast eyes.*]

Raymond [*rises and embraces him. Then drawing back says sadly*]. I did not quite feel your embrace! [*Sits again.*] I must confess, I was a little hurt when you discouraged your companions when they were offering me their assistance.

Luciano. Because I knew no one could make you change your plans.

Manlio. He thought it necessary to favor your wishes, you don't believe that ——

Raymond [*interrupting him*]. Don't trouble yourself to defend him. I know him better than you do. It is because I know that he loves me that I am astonished he did not feel the need of coming to my assistance now.

Luciano. This last hour, doctor, I have not been responsible for my actions.

Raymond. If I were to judge from your expression, I should think you were cross with me.

Luciano. I cross with you? It would be horrible! You who opened the door of Science to me. You who taught me to be good to myself and to others, you who taught me to be honest!

Raymond. And moreover I taught you to be loyal.

Luciano [*starts, but has not the strength to go on*].

Raymond. You see, you have not been loyal to me? [*A brief silence.*]

Manlio [*worried, looks at them, fearing that* LUCIANO *will give way*].

Raymond [*to* LUCIANO]. I don't doubt your sorrow, yet there must be something abnormal agitating you.

Luciano. No, Professor.

Raymond. Don't deny it, because even if you were a master in the art of 'feinting,' you could never compete with my clairvoyance. Sometimes it frightens me! It is like a sudden light which might at any time discover to my eyes the abyss which will swallow me.

Luciano [*nervously*]. Even if something abnormal was agitating me, that would not mean that my affection is at fault.

Raymond. No.

Luciano. But I shall show you that I still deserve your esteem, your advice, your protection. I shall surround you with all the cares, so that your sufferings will be alleviated. My sincere devotion will prove to you that you were mistaken!

Raymond [*coldly, meditatively, mistrustfully*]. Listen to me, Luciano. Your kind words are sufficient for me, yet don't be offended, I shall refuse your assistance, as I have refused that of your companions. But in order to see you happy again, I shall give you, before them all, a proof of my esteem and affection. I should have done it before, had your behavior not prevented me. [*Rises solemnly.*] You are my immediate heir. This manuscript will come to you, you will have to control my investigation, perfect my studies, replace me, and guide these young men [*giving him the manuscript*]. I wish you success. Take it.

Luciano [*pale, hardly being able to stand, tremblingly takes the manuscript and murmurs*]. I thank you.

Raymond [*looking at him attentively and seeing him tremble and not understanding his laconicism, angrily tears away the manuscript violently from* LUCIANO]. Ah! It was not in this way you should have accepted the present, which was really transmitting

you the best part of myself. [*Throwing the manuscript on the table. Then mortified, concludes sadly.*] All right, I confess —I don't understand you [*shivering*]. Now it is all over, I don't want any more explanations! [*Turning his back to him, tries to speak to the others.*] Boys, I am quite tired. But before we separate, I have to ask a favor from you. Don't come back here any more [*almost crying*]. Don't come back, not even—to bring flowers to my dead body.

[*All of them except* LUCIANO *feel hurt at the idea of never coming back to see him.*]

Raymond [*slowly, as if searching for words*]. And if you really respect me, please do not seek to know the cause of my strange desire—because I—forgive me— [*quickly exit to the right, holding his head with both hands*].

SCENE TWO

THE DISCIPLES, *then* JULIA, *then* RAYMOND

[*Some of the disciples look astonished, amazed, dismayed, others deliberately go to* LUCIANO *to reprimand him.*]

Robert. Why did you act so, Luciano?

Almerico. It is inconceivable!

Ernest. I don't understand.

Robert. What new whim is this?

Manlio [*intercepting*]. Gentlemen, this is not the time nor the place to find fault with Luciano.

Robert. But it is our duty ——

Manlio [*interrupting him*]. Our first duty is to go at once.

[*Enter* JULIA *from the left. They all stop talking and bow to her,* LUCIANO *tries not to look at her and hides himself.*]

Julia [*anxiously*]. Where is Raymond?

Manlio. He took leave of us and went into his study.

Julia. Did he feel ill?

Manlio. No ——

Julia. I am a little worried, because I heard him talk quite loudly. Was he much excited?

Manlio. Oh, no.

Julia [*quite worried immediately goes to his study. As soon as she enters,* RAYMOND'S *voice is heard outside, saying*]. Why did you not remain in your room? [*Pause.*] No, remain here now.

Paul [*to the companions*]. Manlio is right, we had better go at once.

[*Exit. They all follow him, some in silence, some depressed, some shaking their heads, some walking slowly.* MANLIO *and* LUCIANO *are the last, and the latter all at once says aside to* MANLIO.]

Luciano. I am afraid he suspects!

Manlio. Not the truth.

Luciano. Between him and me there is an irresistible magnetism which reveals each to the other.

Manlio. It was no magnetism, he was only impressed by your morbid condition.

Luciano. I told you I should not be able to face him.

Manlio. As you will not see him again, don't worry.

Luciano. But if he asks me for other explanations?

Manlio. But did you not promise to go away?

Luciano. Yes, I must go away! It is necessary! [*Just as they are going out* RAYMOND *suddenly opens the door of his study and calls.*]

Raymond. Luciano!

[LUCIANO *and* MANLIO *turn quickly.*]

Raymond. I am glad you're still here, I was hoping so.

Manlio [*stops also*].

Raymond [*to* MANLIO]. Are you anxious lest he should remain alone with me?

Manlio. I was only thinking ——

Raymond. Then, Manlio, will you do me the favor to go?

Manlio [*anxiously looks at Luciano, then bows and exit*].

SCENE THREE

RAYMOND, LUCIANO

Raymond [*almost as if afraid that* LUCIANO *will go, he immediately goes to the door to bar the passage. Rather rudely, but at the same time in an imploring tone says*]. Luciano, unfortunately a specter has come between us, which is not only dividing us, but also keeping us in each other's thoughts. I shall not let you go now, and I know you think the same, until you have told me what you felt when you took from my hands the prize which I had reserved for you.

Luciano [*facing him, but drawing away at every word that the professor says*]. You were obliging me to consider the inevitable, a frightful disaster, which I will not even admit as possible. It hurt me—then—I knew—I could not fulfil the duty you were assigning me.

Raymond. Who would have prevented you?

Luciano. No one. But I am going away from this city—therefore I could not have been a guide to my companions—nor could I alone have accomplished your work.

Raymond. You are going away?

Luciano. Yes.

Raymond. And not coming back?

Luciano. Not coming back.

Raymond. And cut short your career, which you have begun so well? Leave your friends? Abandon your mother, whom you love most devotedly?

Luciano. If it were necessary ——

Raymond. Has the necessity arisen from the abnormal state of mind which ——

Luciano. No! No! It is an entirely different thing.

Raymond. That is?

Luciano [*not finding a ready lie, stammers a little*].

Raymond. Don't worry, I shall not insist. [*Pause.*] When do you expect to go?

Luciano [*impulsively*]. As soon as possible!

Raymond. It is so urgent?

Luciano. Very.

Raymond. Did you not a few minutes ago propose to alleviate my suffering?

Luciano. But you begged us never to come to your house ——

Raymond. Has your departure become urgent, then, since I asked that favor?

Luciano. Call it 'urgent,' if you wish—I have decided to hasten it.

Raymond. Why?

Luciano. Because my departure will guarantee you my scrupulous obedience.

Raymond. Then I must thank you for your departure?

Luciano. I did not say that.

Raymond. But it means that.

Luciano. I did not express myself well.

Raymond. Why should you go on account of the favor which I asked you all?

Luciano [*does not answer*]

Raymond. You don't answer. No one of your companions thought of hastening their departure, so as to guarantee me not to come to my house. Why did such a thing come to your mind? [*Pause.*] You still persist in your silence?

Luciano [*incapable of resisting any longer*]. If I spoke—if I told you all, you might perhaps judge me too severely, and I don't deserve that.

Raymond. If you believed that you were not at fault, you would not have to be afraid of being judged.

Luciano [*impressed by the words begins to give a direction to his thoughts*].—Sometimes there are faults which remain close in our souls and the only guilty victim is the culprit himself.

Raymond. Yet if your fault did not concern me, you would not feel in my presence the weight of your conscience, and you would not recognize in me the right to judge you.

Luciano. My anxiety and my instinct urge me to ask your advice; even if it were severe, it would help me, purify me.

Raymond [*furiously*]. What are you waiting, then, to confess to me?

Luciano. My lips are revolting.

[*A long silence.*]

Raymond [*trying to co-ordinate his ideas, facts, and words, always obeying his clairvoyance, yet mistrusting himself, reflects a little, approaching* LUCIANO, *mysteriously murmurs in his ear*]. Shall I help you to make your confession?

Luciano [*sitting exhausted*]. I have no longer a will of my own. I am inert, I am *yours!* You can do what you like with me.

Raymond [*takes a chair and sits close to* LUCIANO, *remaining a little behind his shoulders. Talking to him mysteriously*]. When I said I would help you, I unwittingly remembered an episode which occurred last year. It was—on my wife's birthday. We were living in town, and I came here expressly in the morning to gather all the most beautiful roses I had in the garden. I only found five worthy of her, and I offered them to her. In the evening you and all the other disciples came to wish her many happy returns of the day. My wife was wearing those five roses at her belt. A few minutes before you all went away, I noticed one rose was missing. Not even for a moment did I suspect that she had

given it away. I said to myself, 'It fell,' and when you all went away I searched for it everywhere, almost as if it had been a precious pearl. I could not find it. That rose had disappeared! Well then? Had it been given? No, no. I was sure of that. Therefore I concluded that one of you had picked up the rose. [*A brief pause*]. And now, please help me out by remembering if you saw one of your companions wearing that rose that same evening?

Luciano. No—I did not see it.

Raymond [*looking at him with suggestive intensity*]. That means someone took it and hid it.

Luciano [*impulsively defending himself*]. To take and hide a rose which fell from a lady's belt had indeed no importance.

Raymond [*rising quickly and triumphantly*]. Ah, you are defending your cause. At last I find the clew! That leads me to the solution of what I wanted to know! [*Almost without voice.*] Am I wrong when I say I fear my clairvoyance?

Luciano [*humbly*]. Did I offend you? It was only a foolish act, to which a man like you should not attach any importance.

Raymond [*bitterly*]. Tell me now the story of your love. Perhaps I shall pity you, but you understand now, I must know all.

Luciano. Such a folly one does not tell, nor remember. What should I tell you?

Raymond. Did you ever tell her of it?

Luciano. Never! Though I was blind and foolish, I was afraid of my crime, and, like a guilty one, I tried to destroy its traces.

Raymond. Are you sure you were successful?

Luciano. My conscience assures me of that, and then her behavior——

Raymond. But you are convinced that if she had understood she would not have remained so indifferent——?

Luciano [*interrupting him*]. She would have shown me her contempt, her anger——

Raymond. Perhaps she tried to dissimulate all that, in the same way you were dissimulating your love for her.

Luciano. What are you saying? Your wife's virtue is a part of yourself; who insults her insults you.

Raymond. Of course, your praising my wife's virtue does not convince me entirely. [*Resolutely.*] I shall learn from her what you refuse to say. [*Going to his study, opens the door and calls.*] Julia! Julia!

Luciano [*rising frightened*]. What are you going to do now?

Raymond. Don't worry, I am not so simple as to tell her what I want to know.

Scene Four

Raymond, Luciano, Julia

Julia [*entering hastily*]. Do you need me?

Raymond [*trying to control himself, so as to better study her face*]. I called you—because Luciano wants to bid you good by. He has the right to do that, he was one of my disciples who came quite often to our house, and moreover—he was an intimate friend of ours. Now he is going away, to establish himself in another place. I shall not see him any more, but *you,* who knows! The world is not as wide as we think. You may meet again.

Julia [*seriously*]. Good by, Mr. Luciano. [*Giving him her hand.*]

Luciano [*hardly shaking it*]. Good by, madam. [*Then turning to* Raymond *as if wishing to make his last farewell.*] Have you anything to say to me?

Raymond [*trying to overcome his feelings*]. No, Luciano.

Luciano [*hesitates to go*].

Julia [*observes them and understands they are hiding something from her*].

Luciano. I am going——

Raymond [*in order not to make* Julia *suspect, he turns to him, saying*]. We have already said good by, Luciano. We have embraced each other—we must not prolong our farewell.

Luciano [*after a moment, exit*].

Julia [*follows him with the corner of her eyes*].

Scene Five

Raymond, Julia

[*A silence.*]

Raymond [*trying to control himself*]. Are you not sorry that Luciano is going away?

Julia. We have not seen him for a long time.

Raymond. Yet it is rather sad to see him go without even promising to return.

Julia [*shrugs her shoulders. A pause*].

Raymond. Of course, you don't know the cause of his departure?

Julia. No.

Raymond. And you are not curious?

Julia. All that does not concern us, does not interest me in the least!

Raymond. In fact his departure does not interest us in the least. He has passed an examination and has obtained an official position abroad. That is what he told me. Do you think he could deceive me?

Julia. I don't believe so. [*A pause.*]

Raymond. What's your opinion of him?

Julia. I never thought much about him. But he appears to be a very nice man.

Raymond. He, on the other hand—spoke much of you.

Julia. Of me?

Raymond. Does that surprise you?

Julia. I don't understand how he came to speak of me!

Raymond. I told him of your devotion to me—and he praised the nobility of your soul, your courage. That should not offend you, nor astonish you. You were good friends.

Julia. We were good friends?

Raymond. I suppose so.

Julia. While he was working with you, I think we used to exchange ten words a day.

Raymond. If I remember rightly, you seemed to enjoy each other's conversation.

Julia. Our conversation was always together with you.

Raymond. That's why I remember it.

Julia. You never wished me to be alone either with that young man or with anybody else, and I always obeyed you willingly.

Raymond. Precisely. You—never had the opportunity to——

Julia [*sadly reproaching him*]. What do you mean?

Raymond. You never had the opportunity of creating a real friendship between you two. That's what I meant. Are you sorry that I am taking your side?

Julia. What I am sorry for is that you are torturing yourself because that young man spoke kindly about me. Did you call me for that? Indeed, you're cruel towards yourself and towards me.

Raymond. Even this time you say I am cruel. And that's the result of excitement.

Julia. Yes, dear Raymond. Since this morning when you learned all these young men had called to see you, you began to threaten again.

Raymond [*still trying to control himself*]. It is more than a threat, Julia!

Julia. Hallucination, Raymond! Hallucination!

Raymond [*quickly*]. Indestructible reality! That young man confessed——

Julia [*proudly*]. What?

Raymond. No! No! It is not true, it is not true—I am only inventing it—I am resorting to this subterfuge again so as to find out. You understand no one would make such a confession to a husband—and then Luciano is so taken up with his science, his ideas, and he thinks so much of me—that he could never love you.

Julia [*sincerely*]. And if he loved me, why should you fear? No woman would love a man simply because she knows she is loved.

Raymond [*timidly*]. Yet if a good man should constantly go on loving a woman, making sacrifices, would not your sublime efforts finally be in vain?

Julia. You're asking the same questions you asked this morning.

Raymond [*sincerely*]. No, dearest, these are not the same questions which I asked this morning, because then it was only a shadow, now a reality. We're convinced of the existence of such a man.

Julia. But how do you know I am also convinced of it?

Raymond. Because when I tried to deny what imprudently had escaped me, you did not believe I had lied to you before. That meant you were sure of being loved. Therefore I do not attach much importance to my questions. But in order that you may be sure of your answers, let me tell you that Luciano has a beautiful soul. He fought very hard before he permitted me to let him confess his love for you. The reason of his departure, which is going to ruin his career, is because he felt his duty towards me and you to run away. And now that you know what he is capable of, can you

still rely on your strength, that is, not to be tempted by his admirable, constant love?

Julia. Yes, Raymond. What I feel for that man is just like what I feel for the others, indifference. If cruel 'Fate' wants me to outlive you, I will defend myself! But why speak of these horrible things!

Raymond. Tell me, please, what you will do if you outlive me?

Julia. I may retire somewhere. I don't know. I may do some good, open a home; help some poor women who have remained alone in the world, especially those who, like me, have no ambition, those whose souls are eternally in mourning. Do you understand me, Raymond? In so doing I would create a religion of the 'Sentiment of Fidelity.' That would help me, give me strength and happiness.

Raymond [*while* JULIA *is talking to him he feels deeply moved, but as soon as she ends her speech he is again tormented by the same suspicion*].—But you never said, though, the most important word which would give me comfort!

Julia. That is?

Raymond [*resolutely*]. You must swear, Julia, you must swear never, never to feel pity for that man's love, not even if, after a long fight with himself, he came to die near your door!

Julia. Why do you ask me that?

Raymond. Because only then should I feel assured of your fidelity!

Julia. Wouldn't you prefer that I offer you my life instead of a mere oath?

Raymond. Are you afraid of taking that oath?

Julia. No, Raymond.

Raymond. Yes, you are afraid of taking that oath, and as a pretext you speak of 'Fidelity.'

Julia. I tell you I am not afraid of it. Don't go on like that, tormenting yourself in trying to shake the faith I have in myself. You want to make me realize that the love I have for you is not a real love, and that I will not have the strength to overcome all dangers I shall meet when you are gone. You have even tried to put in my mind a man whose love I never dreamed of. You took the trouble to bring him before my eyes, a real martyr, capable of making the most sublime sacrifice. After all that you insinuate that I am afraid to take an oath you asked of me. Heavens! Don't you understand that such an oath would be a miserable condition between us? Don't you understand it would not be the means to possess my soul?

Raymond [*almost afraid*]. No more! No more! You are rebelling!

Julia. No, I am not, Raymond. If I should lie to you in this moment, it would seem to me as if I were breaking the chain which binds us.

Raymond [*in a moment of excitement*]. Yet you leave open this 'path of unfaithfulness!'

Julia [*also excited*]. Listen, Raymond, listen. Do you wish an assured means of keeping me with you after death?

Raymond. Yes!

Julia. Without giving me the opportunity of offering you my life?

Raymond. Yes, yes!

Julia [*deliberately*]. Kill me! It will be the surest way to convince yourself. Do it, Raymond, do it!

Raymond [*interrupting her in despair*]. I cannot do it. I should have done it long ago if I had had the courage.

Julia. Then what do you expect from me?

Raymond. To lie to me! Because I will find comfort only in the illusion of a lie, I implore you to lie to me. Do it well! Do it well!

Julia [*bursting into tears, and stretching her arms towards him, so as to embrace him*]. Poor Raymond! Poor Raymond!

Raymond [*madly clasping her in his arms*]. Lie to me well!

ACT THREE

The same room. There are no more books nor flowers on the table. Even the large leather armchair is gone.

SCENE ONE

JOSEPH *and* JULIA

When the curtain rises, no one is in the room. Through the window, which is open, one hears a woman's laugh.

Joseph [*enters quickly from center, and goes to the window, grumbling. He looks older. We hear the same joyous laugh*].

Joseph [*looking outside the window*]. Caroline! Why do you laugh so? It is

indecent [*another joyous burst of laughter*]. You have no respect, don't you see your mistress is in the garden?

Julia [*outside in the garden*]. Let her laugh, Joseph. She is still a young girl, let her laugh.

Joseph. It seems to me she should help you to gather flowers, instead of laughing.

Julia [*still outside. The tone of her voice sounds different; clearer and firmer*]. I am glad to hear it. I did not permit any one to help me, not even you.

Joseph [*leaving the window, murmurs with pleasure*]. What a remarkable woman! If he only could see her from the other world! [*Reflects a little.*] But!

Julia [*enters from center, wearing a simple white morning gown with black ribbons. Her neck is bare, and her sleeves turned up, her hair hanging down, tied with ribbons. She carries in her arms a basketful of flowers. Entering goes immediately to show the flowers to* JOSEPH]. You said there would not be enough? [*In order to show him all the flowers, she turns the basket upside down on the table.*] What do you say to that?

Joseph. There are not too many for a wreath. You have a lot of roses and pinks, it seems to me they are not quite suitable for the occasion.

Julia. I want to make a bouquet, not a wreath. To-day at the University they are going to honor his memory and uncover his bust. He will be called a great scientist, therefore a wreath would not be the proper thing. He must be thought of as if he were still living and among his colleagues and pupils. I feel he is always alive and beside me.

Joseph. I must say you are right.

Julia. My gift must be small, and I don't want any one to notice it. He was fond of flowers.

Joseph. Do you remember, Madam, three years ago, the occasion of your birthday?

Julia. Do you mean that time he came here secretly to gather some roses for me?

Joseph. He came back home looking so happy, because he said he had been able to find for you the most beautiful roses ever grown under the sun.

Julia. To-day, in the same garden, and from those same beds, I gathered flowers for him.

Joseph. There were only five roses, Madam Julia, but they were so beautiful! I can still see him, as he was carrying them.

Julia. And how much worry those roses caused him!

Joseph. I remember how he insisted you should wear them all day long.

Julia. But the worst part was that during the evening I lost one of them, and he was so much worried that he remained up all night, and not finding it, he became nervous and pensive. Heaven knows what his suspicions were!

Joseph [*astonished*]. Suspicions?

Julia [*making an effort to forget those sad remembrances*]. Let us talk about something else, Joseph. [*Looking at the flowers.*] I must work now.

Joseph. I beg your pardon, but I alone must do the work. If you had the right to gather them, I have the right to put them together. I had been with my master for thirty years before you knew him. I was and still am faithful to him, as I am to you.

Julia. All right. Each one his duty!

Joseph. And I tell you I would not miss to-day's ceremony for anything in the world.

Julia. I want you to go with me. Those gentlemen will send me the carriage, but I expressly wrote them that I wished to travel alone.

Joseph. I quite agree with you. You had better always keep those young men at a certain distance.

Julia [*smiling sadly.*] You too, Joseph?

Joseph [*raising his eyes to the sky makes a gesture, as to say: 'I must do my duty'*].

SCENE TWO

JULIA, JOSEPH, FAUSTINA

Faustina [*outside*]. Is no one at home?

Julia. Go and see who it is. When I came in I forgot to close the door.

Faustina [*outside*]. You don't need to knock when you find the door open. [*Enters from center. She is a woman about sixty. She is dressed loudly, and her appearance gives the impression that she is always in good humor.*]

Joseph [*meeting her half way, so as to prevent her from coming in. Sharply*]. Who are you?

Faustina. Ask her who I am.

Julia [*recognizing her*]. Ah! Faustina! Faustina!

Faustina. Yes, Faustina, a little older though, but still the same Faustina who knew you from babyhood.

Julia [*embracing her*]. Come to my arms, Faustina!

Faustina [*going to kiss her, then stopping suddenly*]. Will you permit me?

Julia. Of course! [*Kissing each other.*]

Faustina. I have not seen you for thirteen years.

Julia. More than that.

Faustina. Since the day of your wedding. I saw you dressed as a bride.

Julia. I remember, you came to see me —dressed as a bride!

Faustina [*turning to* JOSEPH, *with pride*]. Now you know who I am? [*To* JULIA.] You know why he pretended not to recognize me? Because he did not have a good conscience. That day he tried to flirt with me.

Julia [*pretending to be serious*]. What do I hear, Joseph?

Joseph. Don't believe her, Madam Julia.

Faustina. But all these years, Joseph, have been trying to you. You look much older.

Joseph. I am near eighty. I am satisfied.

Faustina [*to* JULIA]. You look well.

Julia. No, Faustina——

Faustina. Yes you do.

Julia. After all the trouble I have been through?

Faustina. What trouble?

Julia. Don't you know the great misfortune which befell me?

Faustina. You mean? Yes, I do know it. But it happened a long time ago?

Julia. Two years and a few months ago.

Faustina. Well——

Julia. It seems to me it happened yesterday.

Joseph [*intercepting, with an air of pride*]. Madam Julia will not be so easily consoled!

Faustina. I am sorry for her.

Joseph [*angrily*]. I, on the contrary, am glad of it. If she had not been so, nothing in the world would have detained me here! [*Taking the basket of flowers, about to go out.*]

Julia. Don't be angry, Joseph. You see Faustina still treats me like a baby. When she left mother I still wore my frocks, and she does not realize that I am a woman now.

Faustina [*to* JOSEPH]. Did I say she should console herself with another man? Nothing of the kind! Another husband? Never! They gave me one, half a century ago, when I did not know anything about the world. But after him, dear Joseph, may his soul rest in peace, I made a big cross. If husbands were not men, then it would be a different question! But to have to live with men? Heaven forbid!

Joseph [*going out quickly—grumbling*]. Heaven forbid living with women! For my part—never!

Faustina. My congratulations!

Joseph [*shrugs his shoulders*].

Julia. A moment, Joseph——

Joseph [*turns quickly*].

Julia. When the carriage comes let me know.

Joseph. All right.

Julia. I expect Dr. Ardenzi. When he comes show him in.

Joseph [*looking astonished*]. Do you wish to receive him?

Julia. He is Raymond's disciple and also the secretary of the committee. He wrote me he wished to see me before we went to the ceremony. I cannot refuse to see him.

Joseph [*cannot hide his disapproval, but used to obey as he is, says with resignation*]. Well, I shall show him in! [*Exit.*]

SCENE THREE

JULIA, FAUSTINA

Faustina. Is he watching you like a dog?

Julia [*sadly*]. He used to love me so!

Faustina. He seems a tyrant.

Julia [*changing the conversation*]. And you? Tell me about yourself, Faustina. If you only knew how happy I am to see you! Since you came in it seems to me I am no longer so lonely, nor so unhappy! Your gay prattle reminds me of my youth. Ah! How much good it does me! Speak, speak, Faustina! Where have you been, what have you been doing?

Faustina. I've been in America!

Julia. Really!

Faustina. Yes, what a bargain! They

told me that down there gold grew like weeds——

Julia. And instead?

Faustina. I left the gold country with only fifteen cents in my pocket!

Julia [*looking at her and laughing*]. Yet—to-day you are quite swell.

Faustina. All these things don't belong to me. I've borrowed them to come to see you. My dear baby, I am in extremity!

Julia [*joyously*]. *Faustina!* Do you want to come back to me?

Faustina. Don't you understand I am here for that?

Julia. I am glad to take you back.

Faustina. I am a little old, I know, but I can still work——

Julia. The position I shall give you will not be hard. I shall make you the janitress of my asylum.

Faustina. An asylum?

Julia. Yes, yes, it will be open soon. With the money Raymond left me I thought of opening an asylum for indigent widows. Do you understand? Of course only for those who are not able to earn their living. But these are the conditions: They shall not marry again, shall live simply, submissively, quietly, humbly, almost a convent life.

Faustina [*astonished*]. And you?

Julia. I shall be with them. I shall be their elder sister, their principal——

Faustina. A mother superior?

Julia [*laughing*]. Precisely! A mother superior!

Faustina. And I will be the janitress?

Julia. Yes, the janitress.

Faustina [*gaily*]. That is a fine idea!

Julia. Do you accept?

Faustina. I have a right to that position. Am I not indigent, and a widow?

Julia [*much amused*]. Do you intend to marry again, Faustina?

Faustina. Not even if I came to this world again.

Julia. Then I have no objection to letting you have the place.

Faustina. I make my vow of 'chastity,' and become janitress. [*Both laugh.*]

Julia. Dear me, it is getting late! You must go, my dear. I have to comb my hair and dress.

Faustina. Till I get the place I can help you.

Julia. You don't want to go?

Faustina. Of course not! I am here for good!

Julia [*in a childish way*]. Well, then, to-day you will comb my hair as you used to; will you?

Faustina. Once upon a time I was the mistress of your hair.

Julia. You're right, and you took good care of it!

Faustina. You had such a quantity! Such beautiful tresses! Do you remember when, without your knowledge, I cut a tuft of hair to give to that young student?

Julia. I remember you told me of it after the deed. How I scolded you.

Faustina. And you were not too hard with your scolding.

Julia. And just think all the years which have passed, and will pass, and that man will always possess a tuft of my hair!

Faustina. It should not worry you. It will never become white.

Julia. Don't speak about that. You know I have already found four or five gray hairs in my head.

Faustina [*comically*]. Good gracious! [*Taking hold of her head.*]

Julia. Perhaps there are more!

Faustina [*untying her hair*]. I shall tell you precisely how many you have.

Julia [*drawing back*]. No! No!

Faustina [*comically*]. Dear me, how many!

Julia [*sadly*]. Really?

Faustina. No, I did not find any white ones. It is still beautiful.

Julia [*happy*]. What! Not one! I don't believe you.

Scene Four

Julia, Faustina, Manlio, *then* Joseph

Manlio [*stopping on the threshold, embarrassed*]. May I come in?

Julia [*frightened, to* Faustina]. Dear me! Now it is your fault again! [*Trying to hide herself, and fixing her hair*]. Just a second, Mr. Ardenzi, please.

Manlio. Certainly. [*Discreetly retires.*]

Julia. Where are my hair pins?

Faustina [*helping her in fixing the hair*]. You should not be ashamed to show your hair to a man.

Julia. Of course I should!

Faustina. Be assured he is quite bashful.

Julia [*after arranging her neck and sleeves*]. Come in, Mr. Ardenzi—come in.

Manlio [*wearing a Prince Albert suit, and carrying in his hand his high hat and a paper, enters looking embarrassed and agitated*]. I should beg your pardon for disturbing you.

Julia [*still fixing her sleeve*]. It is I who should beg yours.

Manlio. I begged your servant to let you know I was here, but he remembered me—when I called with Luciano Marnieri, and he insisted upon my coming in without being announced. I see I——

Faustina [*observing* MANLIO *without being seen*].

Julia. No, I was only a little negligée, and I am afraid I am still so. What can I do for you?

Faustina [*aside to* JULIA]. May I go into your bedroom?

Julia. Certainly.

Faustina. Where?

Julia [*pointing to the left*]. There!

Faustina. Don't forget the conditions of your asylum!

Julia. That is?

Faustina. Never to receive a man.

Julia [*laughing*]. You silly!

Faustina [*bowing to* MANLIO, *exit on left*].

Manlio [*does not dare to advance*].

Julia. Do sit down. [*Sits.*]

Manlio. I thank you. [*Putting his hat and his manuscript on the table, remains standing.*]

Julia [*looking at him, astonished*]. Don't you wish to sit down?

Manlio [*sitting, rather nervous*]. You must forgive me, madam, if I look so agitated. In coming here I had unwittingly to cross the professor's last wish, which he expressed to us when we came here that day. In a moment of terrible anxiety he begged us never to come back here. And though—I am certain he did not mean me, yet I feel a little upset to find myself in the very same room. I still remember the sad expression of his eyes, and I feel sorry now not to have respected his last wish.

Julia [*quite upset, but proudly*]. Could you not have explained everything in a letter?

Manlio. Truly I could not! My companions have asked me to deliver a speech to-day. It is my desire to praise principally his high morality and kindness of heart. I should also like to mention your devotion to him, in continuing his good work. I should like to tell them of your plan of opening an institution for indigent widows. But I could never have done this without your authorization—and I know I could never have obtained it by writing to you, as your modesty would have revolted.

Julia [*quite annoyed*]. But why speak of me?

Manlio. No tribute could be more appropriate or touching than your idea of raising this kind of temple to the memory of your husband near his tomb.

Julia. I am raising this temple for myself, not for others.

Manlio. But to others it appeals as a symbol of devotion. You will agree with me that this extraordinary fidelity of yours to our beloved dead will be a sublime example to other women.

Julia [*controlling herself*]. I am sorry that my personal affairs are an object of discussion and appreciation, as I do not seek to be an example.

Manlio. But our appreciation denotes our sincere admiration.

Julia [*quickly*]. I am not seeking admiration! It seems to me that my sorrow, my tears, my suffering, has to be controlled every day on account of people's admiration. I am watched closely, and it seems I have even reached the point when humanity can no longer live without my virtues! My whole soul is stifling, and I am under the impression that I am no more free to think, to feel, and to suffer!

Manlio [*timidly rises*]. If I had known——

Julia [*rising, a little embarrassed*]. No—I did not mean to offend you, don't pay much attention to my words—I am always a little nervous, and am sometimes not responsible for what I say. Only I beg of you not to say anything to-day about my institution, or to speak of me. I am coming to the ceremony, because I feel it is my duty, yet I hope you, and all the others who knew me at the time that dear Raymond was living, will henceforth think of me as if I were dead.

Manlio. You may rely on me, that to-day I shall not mention your name.

Joseph [*enters from center, carrying a card tray, and remains at the door, hoping to be seen*].

Julia. What is it, Joseph?

Joseph. A lady would like to see you.

Julia. Who is she?

Joseph. She is an elderly lady. She gave me her card. [*Giving her the card, and at the same time mistrustfully sizing up* MANLIO.]

Julia [*in reading the name, makes a gesture of surprise. After a moment*]. I think it must be very late, and I must get ready to go out. Has the carriage come?

Joseph. Not yet.

Julia. Well—show the lady in, and ask her to wait a few minutes, while I get dressed.

Joseph. All right. [*Exit.*]

Julia [*to* MANLIO]. Then I can rely on you?

Manlio. You may.

Julia [*giving her hand*]. Good day, Mr. Ardenzi.

Manlio. My respects, madam.

Julia [*exit left*].

Manlio [*a little mortified, goes to get his hat and manuscript, then shrugs his shoulders as if to say, 'I was wrong to come.' In going out center he meets* MADAM MARNIERI].

SCENE FIVE

MANLIO, MADAM MARNIERI

Manlio [*astonished and even frightened*]. You here, Mrs. Marnieri?

Mrs. Marnieri [*who was coming rather timidly, is also frightened at seeing* MANLIO]. Yes—I come to ask a little favor of Mrs. Artunni——

Manlio. I thought you did not know her.

Mrs. Marnieri. In fact I never met her.

Manlio. Therefore you are coming here for another reason than asking a favor?

Mrs. Marnieri. Why do you say that?

Manlio. Because a few days ago I received a letter from your exiled son, telling me his state of mind was—[*both speak in a low tone, fearing to be heard*].

Mrs. Marnieri [*with tears in her voice*]. Yes, Manlio, I am continually worrying about him.

Manlio. It is rather strange, this frenzy for a woman whom he does not possess, and by whom he cannot hope to be loved.

Mrs. Marnieri. How can you judge him? Luciano is built like that. He is a real martyr. When he was a boy I saw him spend night after night thinking over his mystic dreams. He has to-day substituted a woman for his old asceticism, and this woman will be for all his life the light of his soul! Tell me frankly, Manlio,—do you think it will help, my speaking to her?

Manlio. Indeed I think your idea rather absurd.

Mrs. Marnieri [*still defending herself*]. Do you think it is absurd to hope that a good woman may be affected, when she learns that a young man is dying of love for her?

Manlio [*firmly*]. You forget that between her and Luciano there is a dead person, whom they both loved.

Mrs. Marnieri. But Luciano did sacrifice himself for him, like a martyr.

Manlio. I agree with you.

Mrs. Marnieri. And then?

Manlio. I am not stating only my opinion, but also the general conviction, that Mrs. Artunni, who was a model wife, will remain faithful to her husband, even after his death.

Mrs. Marnieri. No, no, Manlio. I shall speak to her, because I have my son's happiness too much at heart. Something tells me to hope.

Manlio. Are you hoping she will end by loving Luciano?

Mrs. Marnieri. She might be affected at the idea of being loved and that would be the first stepping stone towards winning her heart.

Manlio. I shall not add another word, as I might appear to you too cruel. I am going, wishing you with all my heart that you may succeed.

Mrs. Marnieri. If you write to Luciano, please don't mention the matter.

Manlio. Of course not.

Mrs. Marnieri. He would curse me if he knew I came here to her.

Manlio. I immediately understood you came here on your own account.

Mrs. Marnieri. He would never have let me come.

Manlio. Well, good by, Mrs. Marnieri.
Mrs. Marnieri. Good by, Manlio.
Manlio [*exit*].

Scene Six

Madam Marnieri, Julia

Mrs. Marnieri [*as soon as she is left alone she looks frightened, and hardly dares to move or to glance around the room. She gives the impression that she feels like an intruder. Raises her eyes to the sky, as if to utter a prayer. All at once she hears* Julia's *footsteps, composing herself, waits patiently*].

[*Enter* Julia, *dressed in black, but rather stylishly, wears small hat with veil.*]

Julia [*seeing* Madam Marnieri, *puts on an air of reserve*]. Madam——

[*Both women look at each other for moment.*]

Mrs. Marnieri. If I have taken a liberty in calling on you, it was because I relied on your courtesy—on your kindness—and also because my name is probably not unknown to you.

Julia [*coldly*]. Will you take a seat?

Mrs. Marnieri. I am afraid I came at an inopportune moment. Are you going out?

Julia. I can spare a few moments.

Mrs. Marnieri. Thank you. [*Sits.*]

Julia [*sitting also*]. What can I do for you?

Mrs. Marnieri. I was—very anxious—to meet you——

Julia. The reason?

Mrs. Marnieri. I had always heard about your kindness——

Julia [*mistrusting*]. There must be a reason, for we do not always wish to meet all those who are kind.

Mrs. Marnieri. Of course not!

Julia [*starts*].

Mrs. Marnieri. For a long time—I have wanted to come here, but I have always been afraid——

Julia [*dissimulating*]. I don't understand you.

Mrs. Marnieri. You are right. You cannot understood. [*Hesitating, and trying to find prudent words.*] I should like to ask you—a favor—to listen to me—perhaps——

Julia [*not wishing to listen, yet almost tempted to do so*]. I cannot prevent you from speaking——

Mrs. Marnieri [*a little encouraged*]. I told you I was anxious to see you, yet afraid—that—all my hopes are centered in you—and that you can comfort much this poor mother's heart——

Julia [*quickly*]. I am not responsible Mrs. Marnieri, for your son's madness.

Mrs. Marnieri [*surprised*]. Then you know all?

Julia. Unfortunately, I do.

Mrs. Marnieri. But how did you know it? He always tried to hide it!

Julia. Please do not remind me of that unhappy occasion. But I am astonished that time has not yet cured him of such a wild fancy.

Mrs. Marnieri. On the contrary, he feels for you now more than he did before. His youth, madam, is little by little being destroyed.

Julia. A mother always exaggerates her son's sorrows. Love can never destroy youth.

Mrs. Marnieri. No, it is not a mother's exaggeration, for I have always tried to be my son's best friend. He always confides everything in me. One day he confessed to me what I have just told you. Two years ago, when he went away, he hoped to forget you, as he trusted implicitly in his good sense and in his sincere interest in his work. He prevented me from going with him, nor could I have gone, on account of my husband, who is much older than I, and of my daughter, who needs my assistance. Yet we remained good friends, all his letters told me of his struggles in trying to overcome his love. You say 'Love can never destroy youth.' I am afraid you are mistaken. A kind woman like you must know all the sorrows that every human soul goes through. But love is our greatest sorrow!

Julia [*sadly*]. I am sorry to listen to you, but I am doing it more for respect to you than from any other motive.

Mrs. Marnieri. Why?

Julia [*bitterly*]. I should feel like a coward in my conscience, if I was obliged to pity a man because he loved me!

Mrs. Marnieri. Pity is not cowardice!

Julia [*energetically*]. I must judge myself. Your clemency will not make me clem-

ent. After all, of what benefit would my pity be to him?

Mrs. Marnieri. Love may come through pity.

Julia [*rising*]. I should prefer to die, if I knew I loved. Our conversation is ended, Mrs. Marnieri.

Mrs. Marnieri [*rises very humbly*].

Julia. You came to disturb my peace, and you did not stop to think that you were violating the sacred mission of my life. I pardon you, because I understand your blind motherly love. Yet I feel indignant towards your son for violating my sentiments, and for sending you here to try to win me over to him.

Mrs. Marnieri [*sincerely*]. No, Luciano does not know anything! I swear to you. He does not know anything.

Julia [*astonished—after a moment*]. I beg your pardon for accusing your son.

Mrs. Marnieri [*humbly*]. I only deserve your indignation. I believed that all that Luciano has suffered had paid his debt of gratitude to the poor dead. I see my mistake, and I am punished for it. It is a terrible blow to me now to know that you are angry with me.

Julia [*quite affected*]. Believe me, I am not angry with you. On the contrary! I am sorry to be the cause of all your troubles, and I feel almost as if I were guilty. I sincerely hope that your son will regain his peace of mind. Indeed that will be my happiest day.

Mrs. Marnieri. I have no more hopes. [*Crying.*] [*A silence.*]

Julia [*impulsively wishes to embrace her, but draws back immediately. Sweetly*]. You must not give up. I admit your son is exceptionally sensitive. We will admit that this struggle to overcome his sentiment may make it stronger. But no one can foresee what 'Fate' is preparing for him, and moreover there are a good many other women on the earth besides myself. [*Trying to control her tears.*]

Mrs. Marnieri [*shakes her head, as if to say she is not convinced. Drying her tears*]. Good-by.

Julia. Good-by.

Mrs. Marnieri [*after a moment of silence*]. Sometime may I call on you?

Julia [*wishing to refuse, yet having no courage to say no, murmurs*]. If you wish ——

Mrs. Marnieri. Thank you. [*Giving her hand.*]

Julia [*shakes it, without looking at her*].

Mrs. Marnieri [*holding it for a few seconds—with tears, murmurs*]. Thank you. [*Slowly exit.*]

Julia [*tired out, sits and immediately appears to be under a magnetic influence. Remains under that ecstatic spell for a few seconds, giving the impression that she is looking far away.*]

Scene Seven

Julia, Joseph

[*Enter* Joseph, *dressed in mourning, carrying in one hand his hat, and in the other the flowers. Remains standing at the door. Seeing that* Julia *has not seen him, announces.*] Madam, the carriage is at the door.

Julia [*starts—pauses—then the expression of her face changes. Putting down her veil, rises*]. Here I am, Joseph. Let us go. [*Goes toward the door.*]

Joseph [*stands solemnly at the door, while* Julia *makes her exit*].

ACT FOUR

A very large room of monastic aspect. The ceiling is quite high. On the right there are two doors, on the upper part of one of them is written 'Manager.' On the left opposite there is another door opening into a hall. In the left corner up stage a staircase going downstairs. In the center a very large double window. On the right a large table, a few chairs here and there. In the middle hangs an electric globe. Another small electric light on the stairs, another in front the 'Manager's' door.

Scene One

Sister Elisabeth, Faustina, Madam Mirelli, *the* Marchioness Antonucci, Adalgisa, Donna Sophia, *an Old* Woman.

[*The room is almost dark. It is vesper time. A great deal of light comes through*

the window. The street and the houses across the way are lighted. Seated in a semicircle, with their backs to the window are, SISTER ELISABETH, *dressed like a nun; the* MARCHIONESS ANTONUCCI, *a woman about forty-five, very aristocratic;* MADAME MIRELLI, *young, slender, sweet looking, dressed in mourning;* ADALGISA, who is about *thirty or thirty-five, she is semicomic, dressed fantastically, yet charmingly;* DONNA SOPHIA, *an old woman, with white hair;* FAUSTINA, *dressed in uniform, gray; an old woman, thin and bent, wearing a black shawl.* SISTER ELISABETH *is seated in the middle and presides. They are reciting the rosary. All the other women answer in chorus.*]

Sister Elisabeth. Agnus Dei, qui tollis peccata mundi——

The Others. Parce nobis, Domine.

Sister Elisabeth. Agnus Dei, qui tollis peccata mundi——

The Others. Exaudi nos, Domine.

Sister Elisabeth. Agnus Dei, qui tollis peccata mundi——

The Others. Miserere nobis.

[*They all cross themselves, then rise, except the old woman.*]

Faustina. Our conscience is at peace to-night!

Sister Elisabeth [*turns on the electric light. Then goes to the old woman and offers her her arm. She slowly rises and then both go out through the door leading into the hall*].

Donna Sophia [*to* FAUSTINA, *who wants to take away her chair*]. This belongs to me. [*Then pushing her chair, which has two pillows, goes near the table, sits, puts on her spectacles, and begins to read the paper.*]

[MADAM MIRELLI *also brings her chair near the table, and begins to embroider.* FAUSTINA *puts a chair near the table for the* MARCHIONESS, *who sits in front of* MADAM MIRELLI, *and begins to read a book through her gold lorgnette.* ADALGISA *looks out of the window.*]

Sister Elisabeth [*crosses the stage, going to the staircase*].

Adalgisa. Sister Elisabeth, are you in a hurry?

Sister Elisabeth. Yes, I am very busy downstairs.

Adalgisa. I want to show you how our neighbor is busy to-night, sending her telegraphic messages.

Faustina. Sister Elisabeth, please don't look.

Sister Elisabeth. What is it?

Adalgisa. Nothing shocking! Only a beautiful girl, who is sending telegraphic messages with lighted matches to her sweetheart, across the way.

Sister Elisabeth. Have a good time. [*Exit through the staircase.*]

Faustina. I think it is terrible to have such a thing happening near an asylum.

Adalgisa [*quite amused*]. Being the janitress of the asylum, why don't you report it to the police?

Faustina. I should rather give a piece of my mind to that man.

Adalgisa [*teasing her*]. Tell Madam Sophia your opinion of men.

Faustina. What do I think of men? If I were not afraid that Madam Julia, who is in the next room, nursing Madam Ferrucci, would hear me, I should tell you a thing or two.

Donna Sophia. Don't you like men?

Faustina [*comically*]. Dear me! Heaven forbid! [*Runs away through the staircase.*] Libera nos, Domine!

The Marchioness [*languidly looking at* MIRELLI]. You are still embroidering to-night?

Madam Mirelli. I should like to finish it before I go away.

The Marchioness. Is it to-morrow you are going?

Madam Mirelli. Yes, to-morrow morning. My lawyer, who got the little capital, which belonged to my poor husband, is waiting for me in Rome.

The Marchioness. You are no longer poor.

Madam Mirelli. I shall not be rich, yet I have no more right to remain here.

The Marchioness. I want to give you a little souvenir, a piece of old lace, a last remembrance of my past happy days. Will you accept it?

Madam Mirelli. You are very kind, but you had better keep it.

The Marchioness [*sadly*]. There is no

chance for me to wear it. I shall die here. Put it on the first time you wear a colored dress.

Madam Mirelli. I am going to live in the country, and I shall always wear mourning.

The Marchioness [*rising*]. Who knows! You are twenty-two years old, the sentimental, equivocal age!

Madam Mirelli [*convincingly*]. Not for me, though.

The Marchioness [*laughing*]. Time will tell! [*Exit from right door.*]

Adalgisa [*from the window*]. Donna Sophia!

Donna Sophia. What is it?

Adalgisa. To-night they have a lighted candle.

Donna Sophia. A lighted candle means "Burning love." [*A silence.*]

Scene Two

JULIA *and the others*

Julia [*enters from the left and stops for a moment. She is dressed severely, but elegantly. She looks a little sadder, but her expression is more emancipated. None of the others see her. She looks at them, especially at* MADAM MIRELLI. *Smiling, advances, without making any noise, approaches* MADAM MIRELLI *and puts her hands to her eyes, changing her voice*]. Who am I?

Donna Sophia [*turns and remains quiet*].

Adalgisa [*does the same*].

Madam Mirelli [*without hesitation*]. Our benefactress! Our angel.

Julia. No.

Madam Mirelli. Our principal.

Julia. No.

Madam Mirelli. Our friend, my friend

Julia. Yes. [*Putting down her hands.*]

Madam Mirelli [*rising*]. Dear Lady!

Donna Sophia. Good evening, Madam Julia.

Julia. Don't disturb yourself. Please go on reading your paper.

Donna Sophia. Thank you. [*Goes on reading.*]

Julia [*to* MIRELLI]. Be seated, dear.

Madam Mirelli. I had finished.

Adalgisa [*advancing*]. You will say I have already kissed your hands twenty times to-day—but allow me to kiss them again. [*Kisses* JULIA'S *hands.*]

Julia. Here is the gay girl.

Adalgisa [*pointing to* MIRELLI]. Yet, you prefer the melancholy one.

Julia [*caressing* MADAM MIRELLI]. Poor dear! She is always faithful to her sorrow.

Adalgisa. When your favorite girl is gone you will miss her.

Julia [*jokingly*]. Jealous?

Adalgisa [*sadly*]. "No longer I fear in my heart
Love and jealousy."

[*Gaily again.*] Good by. For to-night I leave you all alone. [*Returns to the window. In passing near* DONNA SOPHIA *pulls down her paper.*]

Donna Sophia [*picking up the paper*]. Are you crazy?

Madam Mirelli. Would you believe me, Madam Julia, I should prefer to remain poor so as to be able to stay here with you.

Julia. I believe you.

Madam Mirelli. Will you keep me here as your secretary, your collaborator? And let me put the little I have into this institution?

Julia. No, dearest, no. [*Sadly.*] I alone must keep it, because only to me is it necessary. I alone must love it, because there is nothing else for me in the world.

The Marchioness [*returning with a piece of lace*]. At last I have found it—— Ah, our lady is here.

Julia. A piece of lace?

The Marchioness. A little present for Madam Mirelli. [*Giving it to* MIRELLI.]

Madam Mirelli [*taking it*]. Thank you very much!

The Marchioness. I asked her to put it on the first time she wears a colored dress.

Julia [*astonished*]. A colored dress!

Madam Mirelli [*smiles and shrugs her shoulders*].

Adalgisa [*jokingly*]. Madam Julia, Faustina is speaking with a man, and she says she hates them!

Julia. It must be Don Lorenzo, the druggist.

Adalgisa. Not a bit of it. Don Lorenzo is short and fat. But—— Faustina is running here.

Julia [*annoyed*]. Who can it be!

Scene Three

Faustina, Julia, *and the others*

Faustina [*in her exaggerated way, outside*]. Dear me! Dear me! Surely he must have come from the insane asylum! [*Enters, much excited.*]

Julia. What is it, Faustina?

Faustina. A lunatic, Madam! A lunatic!

Julia. What?

[*They all surround* Faustina.]

Faustina. I was standing outside to enjoy the fresh air, as it was terribly hot inside, when a well-dressed young man began to ramble about. It was getting dark, and no one was passing by. Indeed I was getting afraid.

Julia [*anxiously*]. Well?

Faustina. Can you imagine how I trembled when I saw him approach me! His eyes were flashing and his face was very pale. I said to him, 'Whom are you looking for?' Trembling he murmured, 'Could I see Mrs. Artunni?' It is after eight now,' I answered, 'and my mistress does not receive. Of course she is free to do it if she wants to, but I know her habits. Madam so as to give the good example receives like the others during the visiting hours, that is between twelve and two.'

Julia [*nervously*]. And he?

Faustina. I could not make out what he wanted! At first he leaned against the wall, like one who had received a blow, and breathing heavily he begged me to run here to you. Immediately he changed his mind, and implored me to stay. Then he said he would go; soon after, he would remain. He was so agitated, so nervous, I even saw tears in his eyes. Upon my word, it is the first time in my life that I have felt sorry for a man!

Julia [*dissimulating her impatience*]. Did you not ask his name?

Faustina. I had the hardest time to make him tell it to me! His name is something like 'Carnieri—'Varnieri'—I did not quite understand. But it seems to me it is something like the one of the lady who comes here sometimes.

Julia [*turns to the women, and tries to control her anxiety*]. It must be Dr. Luciano Marnieri, one of my husband's disciples. He is the son of that lady who comes here sometimes——

Adalgisa. That sweet lady with gray hair?

Julia. Yes; her son just came back to Naples, after five years of absence, and I am not surprised that he called. But I am surprised, though, to hear he was acting so strangely. Faustina, will you please repeat to him the answer you just gave him?

Faustina [*does not move, hoping that she will contradict the order.*]

Julia [*harshly*]. Well?

Faustina. I am going. [*Exit.*]

Scene Four

Julia, Sister Elisabeth, Madam Mirelli, Donna Sophia, *the* Marchioness, Adalgisa

Julia [*making an effort to change the conversation*]. By the way, Faustina said it was after five, and Sister Elisabeth has not yet brought that broth to Mrs. Ferrucci. I told her of it this morning.

Adalgisa. Shall I go down to the kitchen?

Julia. No, no! She might be offended. [*Going to the staircase and calling.*] Sister Elisabeth! Sister Elisabeth!

Sister Elisabeth [*outside*]. I am coming. I am preparing the broth.

Julia. I was just calling you for that.

The Marchioness. Is she going to take some broth?

Donna Sophia. Then she is better!

Julia. Yes, she is better! It is a real miracle! [*Excitedly.*] I am so happy! [*In the effort to dissimulate her joy, all at once she grows pale.*]

Adalgisa. Madam Julia!

Madam Mirelli. What's the matter?

[*From one side and the other,* Adalgisa *and* Madam Mirelli *support her.*]

Julia. I am all right.

Donna Sophia. You are so pale!

Julia [*trying to justify herself*]. Perhaps it was the news about that young man, whom my husband loved as a son, that has caused me this emotion. It brought to my memory again all my past sorrows; but I feel all right now.

Sister Elisabeth [*enters; brings some broth*]. Here's the broth, Madam Julia.

Julia. Thank you, Sister Elisabeth! Wait, we will go in together. [*To the other women.*] Don't stand on ceremony. Is it not the time you generally retire? Good night, and don't worry about me! [*Gently to them.*] Why do you look so anxious? I am not so frail as you think. Be cheerful! [*Opens* MADAM FERRUCCI'S *door.*] Here I am, at your orders, Madam Ferrucci. [*Exit.*]

Sister Elisabeth [*follows her*].

SCENE FIVE

DONNA SOPHIA, ADALGISA, MADAM MIRELLI, THE MARCHIONESS

[*All four women remain in silence, looking thoughtful.* MADAM MIRELLI *looks more sorrowful than the others.* ADALGISA *goes to the window and has tears in her eyes.*]

Donna Sophia [*aside to the* MARCHIONESS]. Listen; yesterday I read the name of that young man in the paper.

The Marchioness. What did it say?

Donna Sophia. Something—about Africa—Yes, it spoke about a dangerous journey—of the desert—of science—I really don't recollect——

The Marchioness. Well?

Donna Sophia. Would you give the news to Madam Julia?

The Marchioness. Where's your paper?

Donna Sophia. She took it last night.

The Marchioness [*knowingly*]. Then—don't worry. Good night to all.

Donna Sophia. Good night.

Adalgisa [*mechanically*]. Good night!

Madam Mirelli [*does not answer*].

The Marchioness [*a little angry*]. Shall I see you to-morrow morning, Madam Mirelli?

Madam Mirelli. Yes, of course!

The Marchioness [*exit*].

[*A long silence.*]

Donna Sophia [*carrying away her chair, says aside*]. They all have the blues to-night. I'd better retire to my room. [*Exit.*]

Adalgisa [*going to* MADAM MIRELLI]. I don't believe our lady is well. You had better wait for her here. She will be pleased to see you.

Madam Mirelli [*sadly*]. Thank you, Adalgisa. I was thinking the same thing.

[*They shake hands.*]

Adalgisa [*exit left*].

SCENE SIX

MADAM MIRELLI, JULIA

Madam Mirelli [*begins to put away her embroidery in her workbasket, in order to gain time*].

Julia [*seeing her—runs to her impulsively*]. I thought I should find you here!

Madam Mirelli. And I thought you wanted to see me.

Julia. Yes, remain with me, this is our last night.

Madam Mirelli. Is there anything worrying you?

Julia. It is not of myself that I want to speak, but of you. Do tell me all about your plans. What are you going to do? You are young, pretty——

Madam Mirelli. I am going to live as peacefully as you do here.

Julia. With me it is different. I have many duties.

Madam Mirelli. You created them, so as to feel happy. I shall try to imitate you, in your kindness, in your manner of living, so simply and solitary.

Julia. What, without happiness?—without joy?

Madam Mirrelli. I believe it will be a joy for me.

Julia. But you could find joy in your resignation, in your arid heroism, in your solitude, strength to resist all the world's temptations, when your youth will cry out for 'Love'? No, Gilberta, don't follow my example! Don't. Let your youth follow its own instinct, its own road to the end!

Madam Mirelli. But it is my own instinct which leads me never to forget the past, though nothing obliges me to.

Julia. Is there no promise you made to him?

Madam Mirelli. No.

Julia. Did he wish you to remain faithful to him?

Madam Mirelli. No! No! On the contrary he exhorted me not to delude myself to live on 'eternal sorrow.' I still can hear his generous words, yet nothing will compel me to tear his memory from my heart.

Julia [*timidly and mortified*]. Then what I have just told you must have seemed horrible?

Madam Mirelli. How can you think so? After all you have repeated to me what he used to say, yet you have acted as I do.

Julia [*firmly*]. Yes, undoubtedly I have done what you are doing, and I shall go on doing so. But I beg of you to be always a sister to me.

Madam Mirelli. Always!

Julia. You will write to me often, will you?

Madam Mirelli. Quite often.

Julia. Write me long letters and tell me everything that happens to you every day. Even from far away I want to feel that your simple, confident soul is near mine, trying to help me. Always tell me all your thoughts, all your feelings, especially speak of those whom you love and how you love them.

Madam Mirelli [*affectionately*]. I promise you, Madam Julia, I shall write you all the minute details of my life and all the impulses of my heart.

Julia [*discouraged*]. Ah, if only all that would suffice to defend me!

Madam Mirelli. What do you fear? And then from what danger can I defend you, I who am less than you?

Julia. From the dangers which you don't know, and which you will never know, my dear. Yes, you must defend me. Bear me continually in your prayers, you who have so much faith in God, be to me an example. Your eyes are so pure, your soul so serene! Kiss me,—hold me in your arms—let me feel your heart!

Madam Mirelli [*embraces her, and deeply moved, contemplates her for a few minutes*].

Julia [*cries*].

Scene Seven

Julia, Madam Mirelli, Sister Elisabeth, Faustina

Sister Elisabeth [*coming from* Madam Ferrucci's *room*].

Julia [*as soon as* Sister Elisabeth *enters, stops crying*].

Sister Elisabeth. I beg your pardon for disturbing you, but Madam Ferrucci knowing that Madam Mirelli is going away tomorrow morning has expressed the desire to say good-by to her to-night.

Julia. Go to her, Gilberta.

Sister Elisabeth. Shall I put out the light?

Julia. No, I'll do it.

Sister Elisabeth. Shall I close the window?

Julia [*trying to find a pretext to keep the window open*]. No, it is too warm—better leave it open.

Sister Elisabeth. Good night.

Sister Elisabeth [*exit through the staircase*].

Julia [*to* Madam Mirelli]. I shall see you to-morrow morning?

Madam Mirelli. Of course.

Julia. Good night.

Madam Mirelli [*goes to* Madam Ferrucci's *room and closes the door after her*].

Julia [*nervously, quite worried, almost as if attracted by a magnetic force goes to the window and looks out. Immediately she starts, and exclaims*]. Madam Marnieri! [*Much agitated.*] Why is she coming here? What has happened?

Scene Eight

Madam Marnieri [*entering all out of breath, and looking much worried*]. Will you receive me?

Julia [*starting*]. Madam Marnieri!

Madam Marnieri. I must speak to you

Julia [*offering a chair*]. You?

Madam Marnieri [*stands, but leans on the chair*].

Julia [*approaching* Madam Marnieri]. Well?

Madam Marnieri. You understand if I came here to-night it was for a very serious cause!

Julia. Good heavens!

Madam Marnieri. At this very moment, while we are talking, Luciano is on board a vessel, which sails to-night for Africa! It is I who insisted upon his calling on you before he went. I deluded myself! You refused to see him. I am in despair, he will go away forever.

Julia. Forever, no!

Madam Marnieri. Yes, forever!

Julia [*trying to find out*]. I read in the

newspapers that he and others were sent down there on a scientific mission. Even if it is a dangerous journey, yet I don't imagine it will be their perdition.

Madam Marnieri. For him, yes, I feel it.

Julia. Did he not ask your advice?

Madam Marnieri. No, he returned the other day from Milan, and as soon as I learned his determination, with tears I begged him to change his mind. But nothing moved him! He remained impassive, and he did not even show a little sign of consideration for his old mother.

Julia. If he remained so impassive, it means he hopes to see you again.

Madam Marnieri. No, that is not it! If you only knew how in these last days my soul has been watching his! I know more about him than he does himself. Anyhow, I am not mistaken! This morning I hid myself and heard the following conversation which he had with his friend Manlio: 'If I never come back, tell my mother that death was for me a blessing.' Do you doubt it? He is going down there and this journey is the beginning of a suicide. You must help me!

Julia [*frightened*]. What can I do?

Madam Marnieri. Ah! Madam Julia! [*With anxiety; insisting.*] You ask me that? He had the heroism to run away from you, trembling, every time I spoke to you about him. I, in his place, have waited patiently, hoping in your kindness. You know everything and you know that no love can be compared to the one he has for you. You know also, as I do, if you do not detain him here he will die ——

Julia [*controlling herself*]. If I detain him! And then?

Madam Marnieri. You will in time renew your existence.

Julia [*putting her hands to her eyes, so as to chase away something which frightens her*]. No ——

Madam Marnieri. You shall find his gratitude a treasure of kindness which you have never known in your life ——

Julia. Don't! Don't! Can't you see I am suffering! Can't you understand that my energy is leaving me?

Madam Marnieri. Good Lord! Are you helping me?

Julia [*almost as if cursing*]. Through his mother this lover becomes inexorable! [*Falling on a chair.*] For four years you have made me feel your boy's constancy and sufferings. For four years you have been trying to drag me out from my tomb, hoping to see me revive. Yet, you are not aware of your cruelty!

Madam Marnieri. If I had not been cruel I could not have succeeded in bringing you to him ——

Julia [*bitterly*]. You are mistaken, Madam Marnieri. What you have been doing is the fulfillment of the work started by the same man who prevented me from loving another and who died in my arms burning with jealousy. This has been my crucifixion! You have completed his work because it was he who revealed to me your son's love, it was he who made me tremble for my future. [*After a second.*] In his last moment he spoke again of your son. With his white lips he mumbled words, but the dreaded name was pronounced, clearly and exactly. And while saying that, he opened his eyes and clutched my hand. Then—all at once, he let it go—and died crying—[*a brief silence, crying*]. God is witness that I did not take any oath! Yet, as the years pass, I feel chained to him more and more.

Madam Marnieri. No, Julia, the supreme necessity of doing good will make you give up the abnegation you have imposed upon yourself.

Julia. No, I am chained to him. I am lost!

Madam Marnieri. I shall break your chains. I shall break them to save my son. Come with me, Julia, come. You must follow me courageously. It is your duty! When he sees you he will again wish to live.

Julia. You are convincing me!

Madam Marnieri. No, you are still resisting me!

Julia [*without breath*]. No—no—because I shall come with you.

Madam Marnieri [*in an exalted manner*]. My God, I thank you!

Julia [*almost afraid of losing her courage, she rises quickly*]. Let us go—let us go ——

Madam Marnieri. Yes, let us go at once.

Julia [*frightened*]. Let us not make any noise. I don't want any one to know it. You go first, while I get a shawl. And going out my friends will not see me ——

Madam Marnieri. We are already late, Julia!

Julia. After all it is better you should prepare him, as I shall not be able to say anything ——

Madam Marnieri. And if you arrive too late?

Julia. Rely on me!

Madam Marnieri. I rely on you.

Julia. Good-by.

Madam Marnieri [*exit*].

Scene Nine

Julia, Madam Mirelli

Julia [*as soon as she is alone she begins to tremble as if she were going to commit a crime. She feels the necessity of putting out the light, therefore she pushes the electric button and immediately goes to the room on the door of which is the sign 'Manager.' The room is dark now, the moonlight reflects in the room*].

Madam Mirelli [*coming out from* Madam Ferrucci]. No! I shall not say good-by, but au revoir! [*Closes the door, then goes to the table and picks up her workbasket and quietly exits into the hall.*]

Julia [*returns from the same room, wearing a shawl on her head. Seeing* Madam Mirelli, *she stops for an instant. Then halting goes towards the staircase. But in the center of the room stops, shudders, and gives the impression that she cannot go any further. In the midst of her terror she murmurs*]. I cannot! [*Stretches her arms in front of her, as if to defend herself. Then draws back.*] I cannot! [*Suffocating, halting, falls convulsively upon her knees, bursting into tears, she murmurs.*] I cannot! I cannot! I cannot!

THE END

FALSE GODS

(LA FOI)

By EUGENE BRIEUX

Translated from the French by J. F. FAGAN

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EUGENE BRIEUX AND HIS PLAYS

Eugene Brieux, the author of *False Gods,* was born in Paris in 1859. He was first a journalist. As a dramatist he is one of the products—and perhaps the most distinguished—of the famous Free Theatre established in Paris in 1887 by André Antoine for the purpose of producing the works of young playwrights who were unable to gain recognition in the "commercial" theatres. The Free Theatre presented Brieux's *Artists' Families* (1890) and his *Blanchette* (1892), which brought him a reputation that grew steadily and that culminated with his election in 1910 to the French Academy.

In a preface to the first volume of a translation of Brieux's plays into English, George Bernard Shaw assigned to Brieux a place only a little lower than the angels. Such an over-estimate of his importance inevitably caused a revulsion almost equally uncritical. That "he has a great natural gift for the theatre spoiled by the mission of the preacher" is probably nearer the truth, but goes rather too far in depreciation. He has certainly a great natural gift, and he is a preacher; but the gift is not always spoiled, or even always obscured, by the mission.

Brieux's thirty-five plays tackle almost every subject that enters into the fabric of modern society as a whole,—the law, charity, gambling, marriage, eugenics, maternity, and a host of others. About all these he has his say, diagnosing the evil and then pointing out the remedy. In such strictly thesis plays he uses the stage as a platform—with the result that the mere drama is often swamped by the sermon. But Brieux's attitude, although scientific, is not cold and detached: he is passionately interested both in his ideas and his characters. Even through the verbosity and banalities of much of his dialogue in these strictly thesis plays, there shines a high purpose that makes the plays impressive preachments if not always good drama.

In method Brieux is essentially a naturalist, but one who has twisted naturalism to serve his didacticism. His pedigree stretches back to those earlier critics of French society Augier and Dumas fils, with Henri Becque contributing the strain of naturalism, and with Ibsen suggesting various ideas, points of view, and niceties of technique. Brieux is an excellent technician. His style is always direct, simple, and plain, and is utterly lacking in suggestiveness, overtones, and subtleties. If at times his thesis destroys his drama, at other times it is so thoroughly subordinated and is introduced so skillfully that the play is dramatic in spite of its didacticism. Sometimes he utterly forgets or ignores his mission as a reformer and produces such a gem of pure art as *The Cradle.*

False Gods is undoubtedly a thesis play, of modern social criticism (this time of religion), but wearing the garb of ancient Egypt. Brieux himself says, "This play is, without doubt, of all my plays the one which has cost me the most labor and the one upon which I have expended the most thought and time. The impulse to write it came to me at Lourdes in view of the excited, suffering, and praying crowds of people. When the thought of writing it came to me I hesitated, but during many years I added notes upon notes. And it was while on a trip to Egypt that I saw the possibility for discussing such questions in the theatre without giving offence to various consciences."

One may question the profundity of the thought in the play and the accuracy of its archeology and still admit that the idea informing it is of universal import and is brilliantly embodied, that the dramatic action is planned with admirable skill and contains many scenes of great emotional power, that many of the speeches are finely eloquent, and, finally, that the entire work is marked with intense vigor and sincerity.

False Gods was presented first at Monte Carlo in April, 1909. In September of the same year it was produced in London, in English. Its first production in Paris took place in 1912. The only production thus far, apparently, in America, was made under the direction of Samuel A. Eliot, Jr., by the senior class of Smith College, Northampton, Massachusetts, in 1921.

CHARACTERS

SATNI, *a young priest, in rebellion against the gods of Egypt*
RHEOU, *a rich Egyptian*
PAKH, *father of Satni* } *men slaves in the household of* RHEOU *and* MIERIS
SOKITI
BITIOU, *a dwarf*
NOURM
THE STEWARD, *in the household of* RHEOU *and* MIERIS
THE PHARAOH
THE HIGH PRIEST
THE EXORCIST
A PRIEST
THE PARALYTIC
THE MAN WITH THE BANDAGED HEAD
MIERIS, *wife of* RHEOU
YAOUMA, *beloved by* SATNI } *women slaves in the household of* RHEOU *and* MIERIS
ZAYA
DELETHI
NAGAOU
HANOU
NAHASI
MOUENE
SITSINIT
KIRJIPA, *mother of* SATNI
THE YOUNG WOMAN
THE MOTHER
THE BLIND GIRL
FIVE MOURNERS

The action takes place in Upper Egypt during the Middle Empire

FALSE GODS

ACT ONE

SCENE—*The first inner court of the house of* RHEOU. *At the back between two lofty pylons the entrance leading up from below. Through the columns supporting the hanging garden which stretches across the back can be seen the Nile. A high terrace occupies the left of the scene. Steps lead up to it, and from there to the hanging garden. Along the side of the terrace a small delicately carved wooden statue of Isis stands on a sacrificial table. On the right is the peristyle leading to the inner dwelling of Akhounti. The bases of the columns are in the form of lotus buds, the shafts like lotus stems, the capitals full blown flowers. In the spaces between the columns are wooden statues of the gods.*

DELETHI *is playing a harp.* NAGAOU *dances before her.* NAHASI *is juggling with oranges, while* MOUENE *sits watching a little bird in a cage.* YAOUMA *reclines on the terrace supporting her head on her elbows and gazing out at the Nile.* ZAYA *is beside her. On a carpet* SITSINIT, *lying flat upon her stomach with a writing box by her side, is busy painting an ibis on the left hand of* HANOU, *who lies in a similar attitude.*

Sitsi. Did you not know? She on whose left hand a black ibis has been painted is certain of a happy day.

Hanou. A happy day! Why then, 'tis I, perhaps, who will be chosen to-night!

Delethi [*playing the harp while* NAGAOU *dances before her*]. More slowly!—more slowly! . . . you must make them think of the swaying of a lotus flower, that the Nile's slow-moving current would bear away, and that raises itself to kiss again the waters of the stream.

Nagaou. Yes, yes. . . . Begin again!

Nahasi [*juggling with oranges*]. Nagaou would let herself be borne away without a struggle. [*She laughs.*]

Mouene [*hopping on one foot*]. We know that she goes to the bank of the Nile, at the hour when the palm-trees grow black against the evening sky, to listen to a basket maker's songs.

Hanou [*to* SITSINIT]. And this morning I anointed my whole body with Kyphli, mixed with cinnamon and terrabine and myrrh.

Delethi [*to* NAGAOU]. 'Tis well . . . you may dance the great prayer to Isis with the rest.

Nagaou [*to* MOUENE]. Yes! I do go to listen to songs at dark. You are still too little for anyone, basket maker or any other, to take notice of you.

Mouene. You think so! . . . who gave me this little bird? [*She draws the bird from the cage by a string attached to its leg.*] Who caught thee, flower-of-the-air, who gave thee to me? [*Holding up a finger.*] Do not tell! Do not tell. . . .

Hanou [*looking at herself in a metal mirror*]. Sitsinit . . . the black line that lengthens this eye is too short . . . make it longer with your reed. I think the more beautiful I am, the more chance I shall have to be chosen for the sacrifice. . . . Is it not so, Zaya? . . . What are you doing there without a word?

Zaya. I was watching the flight of a crane with hanging feet, that melted away in the distant blue of heaven. . . . Do not hope to be chosen by the gods, Hanou.

Hanou. Wherefore should I not be chosen?

Zaya. Neither you nor any who are here. The gods never demand the sacrifice two years together from the same village.

Hanou. Never?

Zaya. Rarely.

Hanou. 'Tis a pity. Is it not, Nagaou?

Nagaou. I know not.

Sitsi. Would it not make you proud?

Nagaou. Yes. But it makes me proud, too, to lean on the breast of him whose words still the beating of my heart.

Delethi. To be taken by a god! By the Nile!

Hanou. Preferred to all the others!

Mouene [*the youngest*]. For my part I should prefer to live. . . .

Sitsi. Still, if the god desired you. . . .

Zaya. Oh! one can refuse. . . .

Delethi. Yes, but one must leave the country, then. . . . None of the daughters of Haka-Phtah could bring themselves to that. [*A pause.*]

Yaouma [*to herself*]. Perhaps!

Nahasi. What do you say, Yaouma?

Yaouma. Nothing. I was speaking to my soul.

Mouene. Yaouma's eyes weep for weariness because they watch far off for him, who comes not.

Yaouma. Peace, child.

Zaya [*to* DELETHI]. One thing is certain, someone must go upon the sacred barge!

Delethi. Without the sacrifice the Nile would not overflow, and all the land would remain barren.

Hanou. And the corn would not sprout, nor the beans, nor the maize, nor the lotus.

Delethi. And all the people would perish miserably.

Hanou. So that she who dies, sacrificed to the Nile, saves the lives of a whole people. That is a better thing, Nagaou, than to make one man's happiness. [*A pause.*]

Yaouma [*to herself*]. Perhaps.

Hanou. And on the appointed day one is borne from the house of the god to the Nile, surrounded by all the dwellers in the town. . . . The Pharaoh—health and strength be unto him! . . .

Delethi. You do not know, Hanou, you tell us what you do not know.

Hanou. But it is so, is it not, Zaya? Zaya knows about the ceremony, because last year it was her sister who was chosen.

Mouene. Tell us, Zaya.

Nahasi. Yes, tell us the manner of it.

Zaya. On the fifth day of the month of Paophi. . . .

Mouene. To-day—that is to-day?

Nahasi. Yes. What will happen. . . . The prayer of Isis. . . . But afterwards? Before? [*They gather round* ZAYA.]

Zaya. Before the sun has ended his day's journey, the people, summoned to the terraces by a call from the Temple, will intone the great hymn to Isis, which is sung but once a year. Within the house of the god the assembled priests will await the sign that shall reveal the virgin to be offered to the Nile to obtain its yearly flood. The name of the chosen will be cried from the doorway on high, caught up by those who hear it first, cried out to others, who in turn will cry it running towards the house that Ammon has favored with his choice. Then shall the happy victim of the year stand forth alone, amid her kinsfolk bowed before her, and to her ears shall rise the shoutings of the multitude.

All. Oh!

Delethi. And after a month of purification she will be borne to the house of the god!

Zaya. And on the day of Prodigies . . .

Nahasi. Oh, the day of Prodigies!

Zaya. She will be the foremost, nearer to the Sanctuary than all the rest. She will pray with the praying crowd, she will behold the lowering of the stone that hides the face of Isis. . . .

Delethi. She will behold Isis—face to face. . . .

All. Oh!

Zaya. She will beg the goddess graciously to incline her head, in sign that, yet another year, Egypt shall be protected. And when the fervor of the crowd's united prayer is great enough, the head of the Goddess of Stone will bow. That will be the first prodigy.

Delethi. The head of the Goddess of Stone will bow—that will be the first prodigy.

Zaya. And in the crowd there will be blind who shall see, and deaf who shall hear, and dumb who shall speak.

Delethi. Perhaps Mieris, our good mistress, will be cured of her blindness at last.

Hanou. And when she who is chosen goes forth from the house of the God. . . . Tell us, Zaya, tell us the manner of her going forth.

Zaya. Three days before the appointed day, in the town and throughout the land, they will begin the preparations for the festival. When the moment comes, the crowd will surge before the temple, guarded by Lybian soldiers. And she, she, the elect, the saviour, will come forth, ringed by the high priests of Ammon in purple and in gold, and aloft on a chariot where perfumes burn, deafened by sound of trumpet

and cries of joy, she will behold the people stretch unnumbered arms to her. . . .

All. Oh!

Delethi. And she will be borne to the Nile. . . .

Zaya. And she will be borne to the Nile. She will board the barge of Ammon. . . .

Delethi. And the barge will glide from the bank. . . .

Zaya. And the barge will glide from the bank where all the crowd will bow their faces to the dust. [*She stops, greatly moved.*] And when the barge returns she will be gone.

All [*in lōw tones*]. And when the barge returns she will be gone.

Zaya. And after two days the waters of the Nile will rise.

All. The waters of the Nile will rise. . . .

Delethi. And as far as the waters flow they will speak her name, who made the sacrifice, with blessings and with tears.

Hanou. If it were I! . . .

All [*save* YAOUMA]. If it were I! . . .

[YAOUMA *rises to a sitting posture.*]

Zaya. If it were you, Yaouma?

Yaouma. Perhaps I should refuse.

All. Oh!

Mouene [*mischievously*]. I know why! I know why!

Delethi. We know why.

Zaya. Tell us. . . .

Yaouma. Tell them. . . .

Delethi. 'Tis the same reason that has held you there this many a day.

Yaouma. Yes.

Mouene. She watches for the coming of the galley with twenty oars, bearing the travellers from the North. There is a young priest among them, the potter's son.

Delethi. A young priest, the potter's son, who went away two years ago.

Yaouma. He is my betrothed.

Nahasi. But you know what they say?

Zaya. They say that on the same boat there comes a scribe who preaches of new gods. . . .

Yaouma. I know.

Delethi. Of false gods.

Mouene. The priests will stop the boat, and eight days hence, perhaps, Yaouma will still be awaiting her betrothed.

Yaouma. I shall wait.

[*The* STEWARD *enters and whispers to* DELETHI.]

Delethi. The mistress sends word the hour is come to go indoors.

[*They go out L,* SITSINIT *picking up the writing box,* NAHASI *juggling with oranges,* MOUENE *carrying her cage and dancing about,* DELETHI *plays her harp singing with* HANOU *and* NAGAOU.]

Black is the hair of my love,
More black than the brows of the night,
Than the fruit of the plum tree.

[*The* STEWARD, *who had gone out, returns at once, whip in hand, followed by a poor old man, half naked, and covered with mud, who carries a hod.*]

Steward [*stopping before the statue of Thoueris*]. There. Draw near, potter, and look. By some mischance, the horn and the plume of Goddess Thoueris have been broken. The master must not see them when he comes back for the feast of the Nomination. There is the horn—there is the plume. Replace them.

Pakh [*with terror*]. I—must I . . . to-day when my son is coming home?

Steward. Are you not our servant?

Pakh. I am.

Steward. And a potter?

Pakh. I am.

Steward. Did you not say you knew how to do what I ask?

Pakh. I did not know that I must lay hands on the Goddess Thoueris.

Steward. Obey.

Pakh [*throwing himself on his knees*]. I pray you! I pray you . . . I should never dare. And then . . . my son . . . my son who is coming back from a long, long journey . . .

Steward. You shall have twenty blows of the stick for having tired my tongue. If you refuse to obey me you shall have two hundred.

Pakh. I pray you.

Steward. Did Sokiti help you?

[*He goes out at the back; as he passes he gives* SOKITI *a blow with his whip, making a sign to him to go and join* PAKH.]

[SOKITI *obeys without manifesting sorrow or surprise.*]

Pakh. He says we must lift down the Goddess.

Sokiti. I?

Pakh. You and I.

Sokiti [*beginning to tremble. After a pause*]. I am afraid.

Pakh. I too—I am afraid.

Sokiti. If you touch her you die.

Pakh. You will die of the stick if you do not obey.

Sokiti. Why cannot they leave me at my work? I was happy.

Pakh. We must—we must tell her that it is in order to repair her crown.

Sokiti. Yes. We must let her know.

[*They prostrate themselves before the goddess.*]

Pakh. Oh, Mighty One!—thou who hast given birth to the gods, pardon if our miserable hands dare to touch thee! Thy horn and thy right plume have fallen off. 'Tis to replace them.

Sokiti. We are forced to obey—O breath divine—creator of the universe. . . . It is to mend thee.

Pakh [*rising, to* Sokiti]. Come!

[Bitiou, *the dwarf, enters; he is a poor deformed creature. When he sees* Pakh *and* Sokiti *touching the statue, he tries to run away. He falls, picks himself up, and hides in a corner. By degrees he watches and draws near during what follows.* Pakh *and* Sokiti *take the statue from its pedestal and set it upright on the ground.*]

Sokiti. She has not said anything.

Pakh. She must be laid on her belly.

Sokiti. Gently. . . .

[*They lay her flat.*]

Pakh [*giving him the horn*]. Hold that. [*He goes to his hod, takes a handful of cement, and proceeds to mend the statue.*] Here . . . the plume . . . so . . . there . . . we must let her dry. In the meantime let us go look upon the Nile; we may see the boat that brings my son.

Sokiti. You will not see him.

Pakh. I shall not see him?

Sokiti. He is a priest.

Pakh. Not yet.

Sokiti. But he was brought up in the temple . . . 'tis to the temple he will go.

Pakh. He will come here . . . because he would see his father and mother once more.

Sokiti. And Yaouma his betrothed.

Pakh. And Yaouma his betrothed.

[*He goes R.* Bitiou *approaches the statue timidly, and stops some way off.*]

Sokiti. There is nothing in sight.

Pakh. No. . . . [*suddenly*] You saw the crocodile?

Sokiti. Yes. . . . There is a woman going to the Nile with her pitcher on her head.

Pakh. That is my wife, that is Kirjipa, that is mine. She seeks with her eyes the boat that bears her son—Satni.

Sokiti. She is going into the stream.

Pakh. How else can she draw clear water?

Sokiti. But at the very spot where the crocodile plunged.

Pakh. What matter? She wears the feather of an ibis . . . and I know a magic spell. [*He begins to chant.*] Back, son of Sitou! Dare not! Seize not! Open not thy jaws! Let the water become a sheet of flame before thee! The spell of thirty-seven gods is in thine eye. Thou art bound, thou art bound! Stay, son of Sitou! Ammon, spouse of thy mother, protect her!

Sokiti [*without surprise*]. It is gone.

Pakh [*without surprise*]. It could not do otherwise.

[Bitiou, *now close to the statue, touches it furtively with a finger tip, then runs, falls, and picks himself up. He comes up to* Pakh *and* Sokiti.]

Sokiti [*pointing to the statue*]. She is dry now, perhaps?

Pakh. Yes, come.

Sokiti. I am afraid still.

Pakh. So am I, but come and help me.

[*They replace the statue on its pedestal, then step back to look at it.*]

Sokiti. She has done us no harm.

Pakh. No.

Sokiti. Ha! ha!

Pakh. Ha! ha! ha! ha! [Bitiou *laughs with them. A distant sound of trumpets is heard.* Sokiti *and* Pakh *go to the terrace to look.*] It is the chief of the Nome. They are bearing him to the city of the dead. At this moment his soul is before the tribunal, where Osiris sits with the two and forty judges.

Sokiti. May they render unto him all the evil he has done! . . .

Pakh. The evil he has done will be rendered unto him a thousand fold. . . . He will pass first into the lake of fire.

Sokiti [*laughing*]. Pakh! Pakh! picture him in Amenti—in the hidden place——

Pakh. I see him . . . the pivot of the gate of Amenti set upon his eye, turns upon his right eye, and turns on that eye whether in opening or in shutting, and his mouth utters loud cries.

Sokiti [*doubling up with delight*]. And he who ate so much! . . . He who ate so much! He will have his food, bread and water, hung above his head, and he will leap to get it down, whilst others will dig holes beneath his feet to prevent his touching it.

Pakh. Because his crimes are found to outnumber his merits. . . .

Sokiti. And we—we—say—what will happen to us?

Pakh. We shall be found innocent by the two and forty judges.

Sokiti. And after?—after?

Pakh. We shall go to the island of the souls—in Amenti——

Sokiti. Yes, where there will be . . . Speak. What shall we have in the island of the souls?

Pakh. Baths of clear water. . . .

Sokiti [*with loud laughter*]. What else . . . what else?

Pakh. Ears of corn of two arms' length. [*Laughing.*]

Sokiti [*laughing*]. Yes, ears of corn, of two arms' length.

Pakh. And bread of maize, and beans.

Sokiti. And blows of the stick—say, will there be blows of the stick?

Pakh. Never again.

Sokiti. Never again. . . .

Pakh. I shall forget all I have endured.

Sokiti. I shall be famished; and I shall be able to eat until my hunger is gone . . . every day!

Bitiou. And I—I shall be tall, with straight strong legs, like the rest of the world.

Pakh. That will be better than having been prince on the earth.

[*They laugh. The* Steward *appears.*]

Steward. What are you doing there? [*Striking them with the whip.*] Your mistress comes! Begone!

[*They go out.*]

[*The* Steward *bows low before* Mieris, *who is blind, and who enters with her arms full of flowers and led by* Yaouma. *The* Steward *retires.*]

Mieris [*gently*]. Leave me, Yaouma—I shall be able to find my way to her, alone.

Yaouma. Yes, mistress. . . . [*Nevertheless, she goes with her noiselessly.*]

Mieris [*smiling*]. I can feel you do not obey. Be not afraid. [*She has come as far as the little statue of* Isis.] You see, I do not lose my way. I have come every day to bring her flowers, a long, long time. . . . Leave me.

Yaouma. Yes, mistress. [*She withdraws.*]

Mieris [*touching the statue in the manner of the blind*]. Yes, thou art Isis. I know thy face, and I can guess thy smile. [*She takes some of the flowers which she has laid beside her and lays them one by one on the pedestal of the statue.*] Behold my daily offering! I know this for a white lotus flower. It is for thee. I am not wrong, this one, longer, and with the heavier scent, is the pink lotus. It is for thee. And here are yet two more of these sacred flowers. At dawn, they come from out the water, little by little. At midday they open wide. And when the sun sinks they, too, hide themselves, letting the waters of the Nile cover them like a veil. Men say they are fair to see. Alas, I know not the beauty of the gifts I bring! Here is a typha . . . here an alisma; and by the overpowering perfume, this, I know, is the acacia flower. I have had them tell me how the light, playing through the filmy petals, tints them with color sweet unto the eyes. May the sight gladden thine! I know not the beauty of the gifts I bring! But all the days of my life, a suppliant I shall come, and weary not to ply thee with my prayers, until in the end thou absolve me, until thou grant me the boon that all save I enjoy, to behold the rays of the shining God, of Ammon-Ra, the Sun divine. O Isis, remember the cruel blow that did befall me! I had a little child. Unto him sight was given, and when he first could speak, it was life's sweetest joy, to hear him tell the color and the form of

things. He is dead, Isis! And I have never seen him—Take thou my tears and my prayer, bid this perpetual night, wherein I scarce can breathe, to cease—And if thou wilt not, deliver me to death—She-who-loves-the-silence, and after the judgment I may go to Amenti, and find my well-beloved child—find him, and there at last behold his face. Isis, I give thee all these flowers. [*She rises.*] Come, Yaouma. [*As she is about to go, she stops, suddenly radiant.*] Stay—I hear—yes! Go, bring the ewer and the lustral water. It is the master—He is here.

[YAOUMA *goes out, but returns quickly. Enter* RHEOU.]

Mieris. Be welcome unto your house, master!

[YAOUMA *pours water over the hands of* RHEOU *and gives him a towel.*]

Rheou. Gladly I greet you once more in your house, mistress! [PAKH *appears, returning to look for his hod.*] [*To* PAKH.] Well! potter, do you not go to meet your son?

Pakh. I would fain go, master, but I looked upon the Nile a while ago; there is nothing in sight.

Rheou. The galley came last night at dusk, and, by order of the priests, was kept at the bend of the river till now. Go!

Pakh. I thank you, master. [*He goes out.*]

Rheou. Is all made ready for the solemn prayer to Isis? The sun is nearing the horizon.

Mieris. Yaouma, go and warn them all.

Yaouma [*kneeling in supplication*]. Mistress——

Mieris [*laying her hand on* YAOUMA'S *head*]. What is it?

Yaouma. The galley.

Mieris. Well?—Ah, yes! you were betrothed to the potter's son—But to-day you must not go forth. Who shall say you are not she whom the God Ammon will choose?

Yaouma. The God Ammon knows not me.

Mieris. Did he choose you, he must know you.

Yaouma. Me! Me! A poor handmaiden—Is it then possible—truly?

Mieris. Truly—Yaouma, go.

Yaouma [*to herself as she goes*]. The God Ammon—the God of Gods——

Mieris. Rheou, what ails you?

Rheou [*angered*]. It was a fresh insult that awaited me——

Mieris. Insult?

Rheou. When I came into the audience chamber I prostrated myself before the Pharaoh. "What would you?" he cried in that hard voice of his. You know 't is the custom to make no reply, that one may seem half dead with fear before his majesty——

Mieris. Did you not so?

Rheou. I did, but he——

Mieris. Have a care! Is no one there who might overhear you?

Rheou. No one—but he, in place of ordering them to raise me up, in place of bidding me speak—Oh, the dog of an Ethiopian!—he feigned not to see me—for a long while, a long, long while—At length, when he remembered I was there, anger was choking me; he saw it; he declared an evil spirit was in me, and having ridiculed me with his pity, he bade me then withdraw. He forgets that if I wished——

Mieris. Be still! Be still! Know you not that there, beside you, are the Gods who hear you!

Rheou [*derisively*]. Oh! the Gods!

Mieris. What mean you?

Rheou [*derisively*]. I am the son of a high priest, I know the Gods—The Pharaoh forgets that were I to remind the people of my father's services, were I to arm all those who work for me, and let them loose against him——

Mieris. Rheou! Rheou!

Rheou. Think you they would not obey me? I am son of that high priest, the Pharaoh's friend who wished to replace the Gods of Egypt by one only God. The court cannot forgive me for that. Little they dream, that were I to declare my father had appeared to me, all those who know me, all the poor folk whose backs are blistered by the tax-gatherer's whip, all who are terrorized by schemes of foreign war—all, all would take my orders as inspired, divine.

Mieris. The fear of the Gods would hold them back.

Rheou. How long—I wonder!

Mieris. I hear them coming for the prayer.

Rheou. Yes. Let us pray—that they may have nothing to reproach me with before I choose my hour.

Mieris. What hour?

Rheou. Could I but realize the work my father dreamed of—and at the same stroke be avenged—avenged for all the humiliations——

Mieris. Be silent—I hear——

[*The singers and the dancers and all the women and servants come on gradually.*]

Rheou [*going to the terrace*]. The sun is not yet down upon the hill. But look—upon the Nile—see, Yaouma! 'Tis the galley that bears your betrothed.

Yaouma. 'Tis there! 'Tis there!—See—it has stopped—they take the mallet, and drive in the stake. The boat's prow is aground. Now they have prayed—they disembark. Look, there is the strange scribe!

Rheou [*looking*]. A stranger—he—I do not think it.

Yaouma. I thought, from his garments, perhaps—— [Pakh *returns.*]

Rheou. Did you not wait for your son?

Pakh [*terrified*]. Master, on the road that leads to the Nile, I beheld two dead scarabs——

Rheou. None, then, save the High Priest, may pass till the road be purified.

Pakh. I have warned the travellers they must go a long way round.

Rheou. Did you not recognize your son?

Pakh. No, he will be among the last to land, perhaps.

Yaouma. But look—look! Behold that man—the stranger who comes this way alone—Pakh! where were they, Pakh—the scarabs?

Pakh. Near to the fig tree.

Yaouma [*terrified*]. He is about to pass them—Oh! He does not know—[*Relieved.*] Ah! at last, they warn him.

Rheou. He stays.

Yaouma. Near to the fig tree, said you! But he is going on—He moves—he comes—He is past them—[*To* Mieris.] Come, mistress, come! Oh Ammon! Ammon!

[*Hiding her face she leads* Mieris *quickly away.*]

Rheou. 'Tis to our gates he comes—he is here [Satni *enters.*]

Satni [*bowing before* Rheou]. Rheou, I salute you!

Rheou. What do I behold! Satni—'t is you——

Pakh. My son!

Satni [*kneeling*]. Father!

Pakh. 'Twas you!—you, who came that way, despite the scarabs?

Satni. It was I.

Pakh. You know then some magic words, I do not doubt; but I—I who saw them—I must needs go purify myself before the prayer—to-day is the feast of the Nomination—did you know?

Satni. I knew—and Yaouma?

Pakh. She is here—in a little you shall see her.

Rheou. Satni!

Satni. You called me?

Rheou. Yes. Did not you see the two scarabs that lay upon your path?

Satni. I saw them.

Rheou. And you did not stop?

Satni. No.

Rheou. Why?

Satni. I have learned many things in the countries whence I come.

Rheou. You are a priest. Was not your duty to go unto the temple, even before you knelt at your father's feet?

Satni. Never again shall I enter the temple.

[*A long trumpet call is heard far off.*]

Rheou. It is the signal for the prayer.

[*He mounts the terrace and stretches his arms to the setting sun. Women play upon the harp and upon drums, and the double flute. Others clash cymbals and shake the sistrum. Dancers advance, slowly swaying their bodies. The rest mark the rhythm by the beating of hands.*]

[*Music.*]

Rheou. O Isis! Isis! Isis! Three times do I pronounce thy name.

All [*murmuring*]. O Isis! Isis! Isis! Three times do I pronounce thy name.

Rheou. O Isis! thou who preservest the grain from the destroying winds, and the bodies of our fathers from the ruinous work of time.

All [*murmuring*]. O Isis! thou who preservest the grain from the destroying winds,

and the bodies of our fathers from the ruinous work of time.

Rheou. O Isis! preserve us.

All [*murmuring*]. O Isis! preserve us.

Rheou. By the three times thy name is spoken.

All [*murmuring*]. By the three times thy name is spoken.

Rheou. Both here, and there, and there.

All [*murmuring*]. Both here, and there, and there.

Rheou. And to-day, and all days, and throughout the ages, as long as our temples are mirrored in the waters of the Nile.

All [*murmuring*]. And to-day, and all days, and throughout the ages, as long as our temples are mirrored in the waters of the Nile.

Rheou. Isis!

All [*murmuring*]. Isis!

Rheou. Isis!

All [*murmuring*]. Isis!

Rheou. Isis!

All [*murmuring*]. Isis!

[*All prostrate themselves save the singers and the dancers.*]

Rheou. We beseech thee, Ammon! Deign to make known the virgin who will be offered to the Nile. Ammon, deign to make her known!

All [*murmuring*]. Deign to make her known.

[*The music stops. A long pause in silence. Then far off a trumpet call.*]

Rheou. Rise! The God has made his choice.

[*All rise, and begin chattering and laughing gaily.*]

Rheou [*to* SATNI]. You, alone, did not pray, and stood the while. Wherefore?

Satni. I have come from a land where I learned wisdom.

Rheou. You!—You who were to be priest of Ammon!

Satni. I shall never be priest of Ammon.

Voices. Listen! Listen!—The name! They begin to cry the name!

[*The distant sound of voices is heard. Every one in the scene save* SATNI *is listening intently.*]

Rheou. The name! The name!

[*He mounts the terrace. The setting sun reddens the heavens.*]

Satni [*to* YAOUMA]. At last I find you again, Yaouma. And you wear still the chain of maidenhood. You have waited for me?

Yaouma. Yes, Satni, I have waited for you.

Satni. The memory of you went with me always.

Yaouma. Listen! [*Distant sound of voices.*]

A Woman. Methinks 'tis Raouit of the next village.

A Man. No! No! 'Tis not that name.

Satni [*to* YAOUMA]. What matter their cries to you? Have you forgot our promises?

Yaouma. No—Listen!—[*Voices nearer*].

A Woman. 'Tis Amterra! 'Tis Amterra!

Another. No! 'Tis Hihourr!

Another. No! Amterra lives the other way.

Another. One can hear nothing clearly now.

Another. They are passing behind the palm grove.

Satni [*to* YAOUMA]. Answer me—you have ears only for their clamor—I love you, Yaouma.

A Voice. They are coming! They are coming!

Another. Then 'tis Karma, of the next house.

Another. No! 'tis Hene. Ahou, I tell you—or Karma! Karma!

Satni [*to* YAOUMA]. Have you, then, ceased to love me?

Yaouma [*distracted*]. No, no, I love you —Satni—but I seem to hear my name amid the cries ——

Satni. Let them cry your name—I will watch over you.

Yaouma. Oh, Satni! If the God ha chosen me?

Satni. What God? It is the priests who make him speak.

[*The sounds come nearer.*]

A Voice. 'Tis Yaouma! they come here! Quick, quick, let us do them honor on their coming.

Another. No!

Another. Yes!

Another. 'Tis she!

Another. No!

Another. Yes! yes! Yaouma!

Satni [*to* YAOUMA]. Do not be fooled. The God is but a stone.

Yaouma [*who no longer listens*]. I have heard. It is my name—my name!

A Voice. They are coming!—

Another. They are here!

[*Every one begins to go out.*]

Another [*going*]. 'Tis Yaouma!

Loud shouts without. 'Tis Yaouma—'Tis Yaouma——

Steward [*to* RHEOU]. Master, it is Yaouma.

Rheou. Go, as 'tis custom, let all go forth to meet those who come.

[*All go out save* YAOUMA *and* SATNI.]

Satni. 'Tis you——

Yaouma [*radiant*]. 'Tis I!

Satni. You may refuse.

Yaouma. And leave Egypt——

Satni. We will leave it together.

Yaouma. 'Tis I! Think of it, Satni! The God, out of all my companions, the God has chosen me!

Satni. Do not stay here. Come with me.

Yaouma [*listening*]. Yes—yes—You hear them? It is I!

Satni. You are going to refuse!

Yaouma [*with a radiant smile*]. You would love me no longer, if I refused.

Satni. But know you not, it is death?

Yaouma [*in ecstasy*]. Yes, Satni, it is death!

Satni. You are mine—You are plighted to me—Come—Come!

Yaouma. Satni—Satni—you would not have me refuse?

Satni. I would. I love you.

Yaouma. Refuse to anwer the call of the Gods.

Satni. The call of the Gods is death.

Yaouma. The God has chosen me, before all he has preferred me. He has preferred me to those who are fairer, to those who are richer. And I should hide myself!

Satni. It is out of pride then that you would die?

Yaouma. I die to bring the flooding of the Nile—to make fertile all the Egyptian fields. If I answer not to the voices that call me, my name will be a byword wherever the rays of the sun-God fall. Another than I will go clothed in the dazzling robe. Another will hear the shouting of the multitude. Another will be given to the Nile.

Satni. Another will die, and you, you will live, for your own joy and for mine.

Yaouma. For my own shame and for yours.

Satni. Light the world with your beauty. Live, Yaouma, live with me! Bright shall your breast be with the flower of the persea, and your tresses anointed heavy with sweet odor.

Yaouma. The waves of the Nile will be my headdress. Oh! fair green robe, with flowers yet more fair.

Satni. Yaouma, you loved me—[*She bends her head.*] Remember, remember my going away, but two years since, how you did weep when I embarked. You ran by the bank, you followed the boat that bore me, I see you still, the slim form, the swift lank limbs; I can hear still the sound of your little naked feet upon the sand. And when the boat grounded—do you remember? For hours the oarsmen pushed with long poles, singing the while, and you clapping your hands and crying out my name. And when at length we floated, there was laughter and cries of joy—but you, you did stand all on a sudden still, and I knew then that you wept. You climbed to a hillock, and you waved your arms, you grew smaller, smaller, smaller, till we turned by a cluster of palms. Oh, how you promised to wait for me!

Yaouma. Have I not waited?

Satni. We had chosen the place to build our home. Do you remember?

Yaouma. Yes.

Satni. And dreamed of nights when you should sleep with your head upon my breast—[YAOUMA *bends her head.*] And now you seek a grave in the slime of the river.

Yaouma [*with fervor*]. The slime of the river is holy, the river is holy. The Nile is nine times holy. It makes grow the pasture that feeds our flocks. It drinks the tears of all our eyes.

Satni. Listen, Yaouma, I will reveal the truth to you. The Gods who claim your sacrifice—the Gods are false.

Yaouma. The Gods are true——

Satni. They are powerless.

Yaouma. It is their power that subdues me—it is stronger than love. Until to-day I loved you more than all the living things upon the earth—the breath of your mouth

alone gave life to my heart. Even this very day, I dreaded being chosen of the Gods. But now, who has so utterly transformed me if it be not the Gods? You are to me as nothing, now. And I who trembled at a scorpion, who wept at the pricking of a thorn, I am all joy at the thought of dying soon. How could this be if the Gods had not willed it?

Satni. Hear me a little—and I can prove to you——

Yaouma. No words can take away the glory of being chosen by the Gods.

Satni. By the priests.

Yaouma. 'Tis the same, the priests are the voice of the Gods.

Satni. 'Tis they who say so. The Gods of Egypt exist only because men have invented them.

Yaouma. The peoples from whose lands you come have made you lose your reason. [*With a smile of pity.*] Say that our Gods exist not! Think, Satni!

Satni. Neither the Gods, nor the happy fields, nor the world to come, nor hell.

Yaouma. Ah! Ah! I will prove you mad—you say there is no hell—But we know, we know that it exists, look there! [*Pointing to the sunset.*] When the sun grows red at evening, is it not because the glow of hell is thrown upon it from below? You have but to open your eyes. [*Laughing.*] The Gods not exist!

Satni. They do not. In the sanctuaries of our temples is nothing save beasts, unclean, absurd, and lifeless images; believe me, Yaouma—I love you—I will not see you die. Your sacrifice is useless. Not because you are offered up will the waters of the Nile rise! Refuse, hide yourself, the waters will still rise. Ah, to lose you for a lie! To lose you—you! How can I convince you?—I know! Yaouma, you saw me cross the dead scarabs on my path. And yet I live! Oh! it angers me to see my words move you not. Your reason, your reason! Awaken your reason——

Yaouma. I am listening to my heart.

Satni. I will save you in spite of you—I will keep you by force——

Yaouma. If you do, I shall hate you——

Satni. What matter? I shall have saved you.

Yaouma. And I shall kill myself.

Satni [*seizing her*]. Will you not understand! The God-bull, the God-hippopotamus, the God-jackal—they are naught but idols!

Yaouma. My father worshipped them.

[*Every one comes back.* Rheou, *who during all the preceding scene was hidden behind a pillar, goes to meet them.*]

Some Men. Yaouma! Yaouma!

Another. Up to the terrace!

Others. Up to the terrace! Let her go up to the terrace!

Another. And let her lift her arms to heaven!

Another. Let her show that she will give herself to the Nile.

Satni [*to* Yaouma]. Stay! Stay with me! Then together——

Yaouma [*in ecstasy*]. He has chosen me from among all others!

All. Yaouma!

Satni. She has refused! She has refused! And I will take her away.

All. No! No! To the terrace! The prayer! The prayer!

Rheou. Yaouma, go and pray.

Satni. She has refused!

Mieris. Choose, Yaouma, between our Gods and a man.

Rheou. Between the glory of sacrifice——

Satni. Between falsehood and me, Yaouma——

Yaouma. The God has called me to save my brothers!

Satni. You are going to death!

Yaouma. To life—the real life—the life with the Gods. [*Going to the terrace.*]

Satni. They lie!

Yaouma. Peace!

Satni. In spite of you, I will save you. [Yaouma *goes up the stairway leading to the terrace.* Satni *stands on a bench and shouts to the crowd.*] Hear me, my brothers, I know of better Gods, of Gods who ask for no victims——

The People. They are false Gods!

Satni. They are better Gods——

Steward. Rheou! Rheou! bid him cease!

Rheou. No—let him speak.

Satni. I come to save you from error, to overthrow the idols, to teach you eternal truths——

[*An immense shout of acclamation drowns the rest of* Satni's *words,*

as YAOUMA, *who has appeared on the terrace above, stands with her arms raised to the setting sun.* MIERIS *kneels and crosses her hands in prayer.*]

ACT TWO

SCENE—*Same as Act I*

RHEOU *discovered alone. After a few moments the* STEWARD *enters through the gates.*

Rheou. What have you seen?

Steward. The preparations for the festival continue.

Rheou. At the Temple?

Steward. At the Temple.

Rheou. For the Feast of Prodigies?

Steward. For the Feast of Prodigies.

Rheou. And the priests believe they can celebrate it to-morrow?

Steward. I have seen no reason to doubt of it.

Rheou. Without Yaouma?

Steward. I do not know.

Rheou. You are mistaken perhaps. Did you go down as far as the Nile?

Steward. Yes, master.

Rheou. Well?

Steward. They have finished the decoration of the sacred barge.

Rheou. I do not understand it.

Steward. Nor I, for I know that a certain number of the soldiers have refused to renew the attempt of yesterday ——

Rheou. They have refused?

Steward. Yes.

Rheou. What did they say?

Steward. That they were afraid.

Rheou. Of what—of whom?

Steward. Of Satni.

Rheou. Of Satni?

Steward. Yes. They say it was he who caused the miracle of yesterday.

Rheou. What—what do they say? Their words—tell me?

Steward. That it was he ——

Rheou. He, Satni? ——

Steward. Yes.

Rheou. Who caused the miracle of yesterday?

Steward. Yes.

Rheou. The miracle that prevented them from carrying out the order of the High Priest?

Steward. Yes.

Rheou. The order to come here and seize Yaouma?

Steward. Yes.

Rheou. So that is what they say?

Steward. Every one says it.

Rheou [*after some reflection*]. Come, it is time you learned the truth, that you may repeat it all. In the countries whither he went Satni learned many things—great things. Come hither, lend your ear. He declares there be other gods than the gods of Egypt—and more powerful. If you remember, my father and the Pharaoh Amenotep likewise declared this, and would have made these gods known to us. How they were frustrated you know. It seems—for my own part I know not, 'tis Satni says so, ceaselessly, these two months since his return—it seems, then, the time is come when these Gods would make them known to us. They have endowed Satni with superhuman power. That I *know,* and none may doubt it now. Satni is resolved to keep his betrothed, and the Lybian Guards were not deceived: it was he who yesterday called down the thunder and the floods from Heaven upon the soldiers sent here to seize Yaouma.

Steward. The oldest remember but one such prodigy.

Rheou. What I have told you, tell to all; and this, besides, say to them: each time that any would cross the will of Satni—they who dare the attempt will be scattered, even as the guards were scattered yesterday. Add this, that Satni is guided by the spirit of the dead Pharaoh, that I last night beheld my father's spirit, and that great events will come to pass in Egypt.

Steward. I shall tell them.

Rheou. Behold, the envoy of the new gods! Leave me to speak with him. Go, repeat my words.

[*The* STEWARD *goes out.* SATNI *enters from the back.* RHEOU *prostrates himself before* SATNI.]

Satni [*looking behind him*]. Before which God do you still bow down?

Rheou. Before you. If you be not a God, you are the spirit of a God.

Satni. I do not understand your words.

Rheou. Who can call down thunderbolts from heaven, unless he be an envoy of the Gods?

Satni. I am no ——

Rheou. 'Tis well, 'tis well. You would have us blind to your power of working miracles. After yesterday you can hide it no more. Henceforth, Satni, you must no longer confine your teaching to Mieris, to me, to your parents, Yaouma, to a few—henceforth you may speak to all, all ears are opened by this miracle.

Satni. Let us leave that! I pray you rise and tell me rather what has befallen Yaouma.

Rheou. Yaouma!—Did she not at first interpret the thunderclap as sign of the wrath of Ammon against her?

Satni. She believes still in Ammon, then, despite all I have said to her?

Rheou. Happily I undeceived her. I made her understand that 'twas you the elements obeyed, that the thunder that frightened her was but a sign of your power.

Satni. Why should you lie to her?

Rheou. It was not wholly lying. Besides, it was fortunate I could thus explain the event. Had you but seen her ——

Satni. All my efforts of these two months past, in vain!

Rheou. You remember when you left us yesterday. You might have thought that all her superstitions were banished at last. She no longer answered you, she questioned you no more, and at your last words her silence confirmed the belief that at length you had won her away from Ammon. Yet after you were gone, at the moment of entering her hiding place, she was swept with sudden fury as though an evil spirit had entered her, wept, cried and tore her hair ——

Satni. What said she?

Rheou. "To the temple! to the temple! I would go to the temple! The God has chosen me! The God awaits me! Egypt will perish!" In short, words of madness. She would have killed herself!

Satni. Killed herself!

Rheou. We had to put constraint on her. And 'twas only when I led her to this terrace, after the thunderbolt, and pointed out the scattered soldiery, that she came to herself, that at length she perceived that your God was the most powerful. "What," she cried, "'tis he, he, my Satni, who shakes the heavens and the earth for me! For me!" she murmured, "for me!" She would have kissed your sandals, offered you a sacrifice, worshipped, adored you. See where she comes, with Mieris! Stay.

Satni. No.

[*He goes.* RHEOU *accompanies him.* MIERIS *enters, bearing flowers and led by* YAOUMA.]

Mieris [*listening*]. Is he there?

Yaouma. No.

Mieris. Leave me.

[YAOUMA *goes out.* MIERIS *left alone makes several hesitating steps toward the statue of Isis, then goes up to it and touches it. A pause.*]

Mieris. If it be only of wood!

[*A gesture of disillusion. She draws slowly away from the statue, letting her flowers fall, broken-hearted, and begins to weep.* RHEOU *returns.*]

Rheou. Why, Mieris—do you bring flowers to Isis still?

Mieris. It is the last time. Listen, Rheou—We must ask Satni to heal me. Do not tell me it is not possible; he has healed Ahmarsti.

Rheou. Healed Ahmarsti?

Mieris. Yes. He made her drink a liquid wherein no doubt a good genius was hidden, and the evil spirit that tormented her was driven forth.

Rheou [*credulously*]. Is 't possible?

Mieris. Every one saw it. And Kitoui—

Rheou. Well?

Mieris. Kitoui, the cripple, went this morning to draw water from the Nile, before all her neighbors who marvelled and cried with joy. And she had merely touched the hem of his garment, even without his knowing it. He has healed the child of Riti, too, he knows gods more powerful than ours—younger gods, perhaps, our gods are so old —— If it were not so, how could he have walked unscathed the road where the scarabs lay, that day when he came home? Since then, men have seen him do a thousand forbidden things, have seen him defy our gods by disrespect. Without the protection of a higher power, how could he escape the chastisement whereof another

had died? Who are his gods? Rheou, he must make them known to you.

Rheou. He refuses.

Mieris. For what reason?

Rheou. The reason he gives is absurd—he says there are no gods——

Mieris. No gods! no gods!—he is mocking you.

Rheou. He is bound to secrecy, perhaps.

Mieris. Rheou, know you that this Ahmarsti—these two years now, on the day of Prodigies, have I heard her at my side howling prayers at the goddess that were never answered.

Rheou. I know. Satni declares he could have healed all whom the goddess has relieved.

Mieris [*to herself*]. He relieves even those women whom she abandons—[*After a pause.*] He must teach you the words that work these miracles.

Rheou. He refuses.

Mieris. Force him!

Rheou. He says there are none.

Mieris. Threaten him with death—he will speak.

Rheou. No.

Mieris [*with excitement*]. But you do not understand me!—he has healed Ahmarsti, he has healed Kitoui, wherefore should he not heal me?

Rheou [*sadly*]. Ah! Mieris, Mieris, think you I waited for your prayer, to ask him that?

Mieris. Well—well——?

Rheou. I could gain nothing but these words from him: "Could I overcome the evil Mieris suffers from, even now should she rejoice in the splendor of day."

Mieris. Nothing is impossible to the gods, even to ours; how much more then to his! —He did not yield to your prayers!—Insist, order, threaten! Force him to speak. You have the right to command him. He is but the son of a potter after all. Let him be whipped till he yield. Do anything, have him whipped to the point of death—or better, offer him fields, the hill of date-trees that is ours; offer him our flocks, and my jewels and precious stones—tell him we know him for a living god—but I would be healed. I would be healed! I would see! See! [*With anger.*] Ah! you know not the worth of the light, you whose eyes are filled with it! You cannot picture my misery, you who suffer it not! You grieve for me, I doubt not, but you think you have done enough, having given me pity! —No, no, I am wrong—I am unjust. But forgive me; this thought that I might be healed has made me mad. Rheou!—Think, Rheou, what it means to be blind, to have been so always, and to know that beside one are those who see—who see!—The humblest of our shepherds, the most wretched of the women at our looms, I envy them. And when, at times, I hear them complain, I curb myself lest I should strike them, wretches that know not their good fortune. I feel that all you, you who see, should never cease from songs of joy, and hymns of thanksgiving to the gods—[*With an outburst.*] I speak of sight! Think, Rheou, I have not even a clear idea of what it means "to see." To recognize without touch, to know without need to listen. To perceive the sun another way than by the heat of its rays!—They say the flowers are so beautiful!—I would see *you,* my well-beloved. Oh! the day when I shall see your eyes!—I would see, that you may show me some likeness of the little child we lost. You shall point out, among the rest, those that are most like to him. This misery—O my beloved!—I do not often speak of it—but I suffer it! I suffer it! [*She is in his arms.*] They have taken from me the hope that our gods will heal me; if they give me nothing in its place, know you what I shall do?—I shall go away, alone, one night, touching the walls, and the trees—and the trees, with my arms outstretched; I shall go down as far as the Nile and there, gently, I shall glide away to death.

Rheou. Peace, O my best beloved!

Mieris [*listening*]. I hear him—he comes. I leave you with him! Lead him to my door—love me—save me!

[*She attempts to go out, he leads her.* SATNI *enters followed by* NOURM, SOKITI, *and* BITIOU.]

Nourm. Yes! Thou who art mighty!—Yes! Yes! Make me rich—I have had blows of the stick so long! I would be rich to be able to give them in my turn!—You have but to speak the magic words.

Satni [*somewhat brutally*]. Leave me! I am no magician.

Sokiti. I, I do not ask for money. Listen

not to him; he is bad. I, I only ask that you make Khames die; he has taken from me the girl I would have wed. [SATNI *pushes him away.* SOKITI, *weeping, clings to his garments.*] Grant it, I implore you—I implore you!—My life is gone with her—make him die, I pray you.

Satni. Leave me!

Sokiti. Hear me.

Bitiou [*coming between them and striking* SOKITI]. Begone! Begone! He would not hear you! [SOKITI *goes out.*] Listen—listen—you see I made him go. All—all whom you will, I shall beat them for you. Listen—if you could make me tall like you, and steady on my legs—See—here—I have hidden away, safe, three gold rings, that I stole a while since; I will give them you.

Satni. Go, take them to the high priest——

Bitiou [*pitiably*]. I have given four to him already.

[SOKITI *and* NOURM *are conferring together. Enter* RHEOU. *They run away.* BITIOU *follows, falling and picking himself up.*]

Rheou. What do they want of you?

Satni. They came here, following me. They believe me gifted with supernatural power, and crave miracles of me, as though I were a God, or a juggler. I am neither, and I work no miracles.

Rheou. None the less you have worked two miracles.

Satni. Not one.

Rheou. And you will work yet one more.

Satni. Never. I came hither not to perform miracles, but to prevent them.

Rheou. You will heal Mieris.

Satni. No one can heal her, nor I, nor any other.

Rheou. Give her a little hope.

Satni. How can I?

Rheou. Tell her you will invoke your God, and that some day perhaps——

Satni. I have no God. If there be a god, he is so great, so far from us, so utterly beyond our comprehension, that for us it is as though he did not exist. To believe that one of our actions, to believe that a prayer could act upon the will of God, is to belittle him, to deny him. He is himself incapable of a miracle; it would be to belie himself. Could he improve his work, he would not then have created it perfect from the first. He could not do it.

Rheou. Our ancient gods at least permitted hope.

Satni. Keep them.

Rheou. In the heart of Mieris, you have destroyed them.

Satni. Do you regret it?

Rheou. Not yet.

Satni. What would you say?

Rheou. Even if it be true that sight will never be given her, do not tell her so. Far better promise that she will be healed.

Satni. And to all the others, must I promise healing too? Because in a house I relieved a child, whose illness sprang from a cause I could remove; because a woman, ill in imagination, did cure herself by touching my garment's hem; must I then descend to play the part of sorcerer? I had behind me there, but now, a rabble of the wretched imploring me, believing me all powerful, begging for them and theirs unrealizable miracles. Should I then cheat them too, all those poor wretches, promising what I know I cannot give? I came hither to make an end of lies, not to replace them with others.

Rheou [*with passion*]. Ah! You would not lie. You would not lie to the wretched. You would not lie to Mieris. You would lie to no one, is it so?

Satni. To no one.

Rheou. We shall see! [*Calling right.*] Yaouma!—Let them send Yaouma! [*To* SATNI.] Not to her either, then? Good; if you speak the truth to her, if you deny that you have supernatural power, if you force her to believe you had no hand in the miracle that saved her yesterday, she will give herself to the priests, or she will kill herself! What will you do?

[YAOUMA *enters, she tries to prostrate herself before* SATNI, *who prevents her. In the meantime the* STEWARD, *greatly moved, has come to whisper to* RHEOU.]

Rheou [*deeply moved*]. He is there!

Steward. In person.

Rheou. 'Tis an order of the Pharaoh, then?

Steward. Yes.

Rheou. I am troubled.

[*He goes out with the* STEWARD.]

Satni [*to* YAOUMA]. What is it ails you? Why are you so sad?

Yaouma. You will want nothing more of me, now that you are a god.

Satni. Be not afraid: I am not a god.

Yaouma. Almost. 'Tis a daughter of the Pharaoh you will marry now.

Satni. I will marry you.

Yaouma. You will swear to?

Satni. Yes.

Yaouma. By Ammon?—[*Recollecting.*] By your god?

Satni. My god is not concerned with us.

Yaouma. Who then is concerned with us?

Satni. No one.

Yaouma. You do not want to tell me. You treat me as a child—mocking me.

Satni. Why do you need an oath? I love you, and you shall be my wife.

Yaouma [*radiant*]. I shall be your wife! —I, little Yaouma, I shall be wife to a man whom the heavens obey!—[*A pause.*] When I think that you loosed the thunder for my sake ——

Satni. No, vain child, I did not loose the thunder.

Yaouma. Yes, yes, yes—I understand. You want no one to know that you have found the book of Thoth—fear not, I know how to hold my peace. [*Coaxingly she puts her arms round* SATNI'S *neck and rubs her cheek against his.*] Tell me, how did you find it?

Satni. I have not found the book of magic spells; besides, it would have profited me nothing.

Yaouma. Sit—you would not sit? They say 'tis shut up in three caskets, hidden at the bottom of the sea.

Satni. I tell you again I neither sought, nor found it.

Yaouma. What do you do, then, to strike fire from heaven?

Satni. I did not strike fire from heaven.

Yaouma [*crossly*]. Oh! I do not love you now!—Yes, yes, yes, I love you! [*A pause.*] So it pleased you then, when you were going away in the galley, to see me run barefoot on the bank.

Satni. Yes.

Yaouma [*angry*]. But speak! speak! [*Checking herself, then more coaxing still.*] You wanted to weep? No? You said you did. For my part I know not, then, I could see nothing. But the day of your return, when you learned I was chosen for the sacrifice, then, then I saw your eyes—You love me—You said to me you would prevent me going to the Nile. I believed you not—you remember—Why! even yesterday, yes, yesterday again, in spite of all your words, I was resolved to escape and go to the temple. It needed this proof of your power!—tell me, it was you who shook the heavens and the earth for me.

Satni. No.

Yaouma. Again!—You must think but little of me, to believe I should reveal what you bade me keep secret. [*She lays her hands on* SATNI'S *cheeks.*] It *was* you, was it not?

Satni. No, no, no! a thousand times no!

Yaouma. It was your gods, then, your gods whom I know not.

Satni. No.

Yaouma. Who was it, then?

Satni. No one.

Yaouma [*out of countenance*]. No one! [*A pause.*] You possess no power that other men have not?

Satni. No.

Yaouma [*the same*]. You seem as one speaking truth.

Satni. I speak the truth.

Yaouma. 'Tis a pity!

Satni. Why?

Yaouma. It would have been more beautiful. [*A long grave pause.*] To go in the barge, on the Nile, that too had been more beautiful.

[RHEOU *and the* STEWARD *enter.*]

Rheou [*agitated*]. Go in, Yaouma. [*To the* STEWARD.] Conduct her to her mistress —and make known to her what has passed. [YAOUMA *and the* STEWARD *go out.*] Satni, terrible news has come to me: the Pharaoh, finding the people's enmity increase against him, has taken fright, and striking first, the blow has fallen on me. My goods are confiscated. I am sent to exile. The palace Chamberlain, but now, brought me the order to quit my house to-day, and deliver myself to the army leaving for Ethiopia.

Satni. Can you do nothing against this order?

Rheou. Yes. I can kill those who gave it.

Satni. Kill!

Rheou. Listen. I bring you the means to win the triumph of your ideas, and at the same time serve my cause. I can arm all the dwellers on my lands. We two must lead them. They will follow you,

knowing you all-powerful. Nay, hear me—wait. The soldiers, who fear you, will not dare resist us; we shall kill the high priest, the Pharaoh if need be—we shall be masters of Egypt.

Satni. I would not kill.

Rheou. So be it. Enough that you declare yourself ready to repeat the miracle of yesterday.

Satni. I would not lie.

Rheou. If you would neither kill nor lie, you will never succeed in governing men.

Satni. I would fight the priests of Ammon, not imitate them.

Rheou. You will never triumph without doing so. Profit by events. Do not deny the power they believe to be yours. Men will not follow you, if you speak only to their reason. You are above the crowd by your learning; that gives you rights. You would lead them to the summits; to get there, one must blindfold those who suffer from dizziness.

Satni. I refuse.

Rheou. One would think you were afraid of victory!

Satni. Rheou, 'tis not the victory of my ideas you seek, 'tis your own vengeance, your own ambition.

Rheou. They wish to rush the people of Egypt into an unjust and useless war. They hesitate; they feel the people lacking zest, that is why they have delayed the going of the army till the Feast of Prodigies. To-morrow they will make the goddess speak, and all those poor creatures will be led away. You can save thousands of lives by sacrificing a few.

Satni. I refuse. The truth will prevail without help from cruelty or falsehood.

Rheou. Never. The crowd is not a woman to be won by loud wooing, but one who must be taken by force, whom you must dominate before you can persuade.

Satni. Say no more, Rheou, I refuse.

Rheou. Blind! Fool! Coward!

[MIERIS *enters, led by* YAOUMA. *A moment later some men*—BITIOU, SOKITI, NOURM.]

Mieris. Rheou!—where are you? where are you? [YAOUMA *leads her toward him.*] It is true, this that I hear?—Exile—Misery?

Rheou. It is true.

Mieris. Courage—As for me, a palace or a cottage—I know not the one from the other.

Rheou [*to* SATNI]. Satni, can you still refuse?

Satni. You torture me! No, I will not be credited with power that is not mine; to stir men up against their fellows—I would not kill, I tell you.

Mieris. I understand you, Satni—it is wrong to kill!—But look once more upon me—I am poor now, I am going away, will you not consent to heal me?

Satni [*anguished*]. Mieris—Could I have healed you, would it not be done already?

Mieris. You can do it! I know you can do it! Work a miracle.

Yaouma. A miracle! Show that your god is more powerful than our gods.

A Man [*who has just entered*]. Heal us!

Satni. I am not able.

Another. Work a miracle.

Satni. There are no miracles!

A Man. Then your gods are less mighty than ours.

Satni. Yours do not exist.

The People [*terrified at the blasphemy*]. Oh!

A Man. Why do you lead us away from our gods, if you have no others to give us?

Another. You shall not insult our gods!

Another. We will hand you over to the priests lest the gods smite us for hearing you!

Another. Ammon will chastise us!

Satni. No.

A Man. Isis will abandon us!

Satni. It will not make you more wretched.

Another. Then show us you are stronger than our gods.

Mieris. A miracle!

Rheou. He is stronger than our gods!

Yaouma. A miracle or I die! [*Together.*]

Satni. You demand it! You demand a miracle. Well, then, you shall have one, I will do this, but in the presence of all! Go! go! go throughout the domains—bring hither those you find bowed on the earth, or hung to poles for drawing water. Go you others, summon the slaves, the piteous workers—call hither the drawers of stones, bid them drop the ropes that flay their shoulders, bid them come.

Mieris. What would you do?

Satni. Convince them.

Mieris. Now of a sudden, brutally?

Satni. Brutally.

Rheou. Do you believe them ready?

Satni. You are afraid.

Rheou. Day comes not suddenly on night; between them is the dawn.

[DELETHI *leads* MIERIS *right under the peristyle.*]

Satni. I would have day, broad daylight —Now, at once, for all! 'Tis a crime to *promise* them reward for their suffering. How do we know that they will ever be paid?

Rheou. They are so miserable ——

Satni. The truth—is the truth good only for the rich? Will you add that injustice to all the others? Behold them! [*Gradually the slaves and workers of all kinds have entered till they fill the stage. Amongst them* PAKH, SOKITI, BITIOU *the* DWARF.] Yes, behold them, the victims, behold the wretched! I know you all. You, you are a shepherd, you are worse nourished than your flocks, and your beasts, at least, are not given blows. They do not beat the cows nor the sheep. You, you sow and you reap; beneath the sun, tortured by flies, you gather abundant crops. You sleep in a hole. Others eat the corn you made grow, and sleep on precious stuffs. You, you are forever drawing water from the Nile; betwixt you and the ox they harness to another machine, there is no difference, and yet you are a man. You, you are one of those who drag great stones, to build the monuments of pride. You are a digger in the tombs, you live a month or more without sight of day. To glorify the death of others, you give your life. You are a trainer of lions for war; your father was eaten—they would have wept had the lion died—How can it be that you accept all this, when you see beside you happiness without work, and abundance without effort? I will tell you. 'Tis because, in the name of the god Ammon-Ra, they have said to you: "Have patience, this injustice will last but a lifetime." Fools! nothing but that! All the time you are on earth, suffer, produce for others. Content ye with hunger, you who produce food. Content ye with worse usage than the swine, you who have guard of them. Content ye to sleep in the open, you who build palaces and temples. Content ye with all miseries, you carvers of gold, and setters of precious stones. Look without envy, without anger, on the welfare of those who do nothing: all this will last only the whole of your lives! After, in another world, you shall have the fulness of all the crops, and the joy of all the pleasures. Well, they lied to you: there is no island of souls, there are no happy fields, there is no life of atonement after this. [*Loud murmurs.*] They have set up these gods for your servile adoration; they have counselled you: "Bow down, these gods will avenge you." They have said: "Prostrate yourselves, these gods are just." They have said: "Throw yourselves to earth, these gods are good." They have declared them all-powerful; shut them in sanctuaries of awful gloom, whence you are shown them once a year, to keep alive your terror of the Gods; and last, they have made you believe no man may touch these images and live. I tell you they lied—I will show you they lied to you. Behold the most mighty Ammon—the father of the gods—I spit my hate at him! Thou art but an idol; I curse thee for the evil men have done in thy name! I curse thee in the name of all the enslaved, in the name of all those they have cheated with hopes of an avenging life; in the name of all who for thousands of years have groaned and wept; suffered insult, outrage, blows, death, without thought of revolt, because promises made in thy name had soothed their rage to sleep! And I curse thee for the sorrow that now fills me, and for the ills that must come even of thy going! Die! [*He throws a stool in the face of the statue.*] You others do as I. Go, climb their pedestals! Lay hold of their hands, they are lifeless! Strike, 'tis but an image! Spit in their faces, they are senseless! Strike! Ruin! All this is nothing but hardened mud!

[*The crowd, which had punctuated the words of* SATNI *with cries and murmurs, has approached the statues behind him and followed his example, blaspheming, and howling with fury. The more courageous begin, being hoisted to the pedestals, the rest follow suit. The gods are overthrown.*]

Rheou. Now, let them open my gran-

aries, that each may help himself; and take from my flocks to sate you all.

[*Cries of joy. They go out slowly.* BITIOU *in the meantime approaches an overthrown statue and still half-afraid, kicks it. He tries to run, falls, picks himself up, then seeing that decidedly there is no danger, seats himself on the stomach of the goddess Thoueris and bursts into a peal of triumphant bestial laughter.*]

Bitiou. Ah! Ah! Ah! Ah! Ah! Ah! Ah! Ah! [*Then he perceives the little statue of Isis which* MIERIS *shields with her arms, points it out to a couple of men who advance to it.*]

Delethi. Mistress, they would take Isis!

Mieris [*in tears*]. Let me keep her——

Rheou. No, Mieris.

Mieris [*letting go*]. Take her— [*Then.*] Stay!

Rheou. Wherefore?

Mieris. Can you part from her, and feel nothing? Even now, Satni, in denouncing the gods to the fury of the crowd, you did not say everything—You, who can see her, behold this little image, think how many tears were shed before her, in the years since she was made. She has been ours for generations. Call up the countless crowds of those who have fixed their anxious looks upon her eyes, dead even as mine are. It is for all the anguish she has looked upon, we must respect her. Tears make holy. I doubt not you are right: she must be broken too—but not without farewell. [*To* YAOUMA.] Where is she, Yaouma? I would say my last prayer to her. [*To the statue.*] Oh, thou who didst not heal, but didst console me; O thou who hast heard so many entreaties and thanksgivings, thou art but clay! Yet men have given thee life; thy life was not in thee, it was in them—and the proof is that thou diest, now they have taken their soul from thee. I give thee over to those who would break thee, but I revere thee, I salute thee, and I thank thee for all the hope thou hast given me; and I thank thee in the name of all the sorrows that thou hast sent to sleep. [*To the men.*] Take her hence—let them destroy her with respect.

[*They take Isis away.*]

Satni. There is nothing so sad or so great as the death of a god! [*A pause. To* YAOUMA, *who comes through the crowd.*] Behold, Yaouma! The gods are dead and I live—behold them! Do you believe me—do you believe me?

[*Sadly* YAOUMA *looks at the broken statues, then bursts into tears before* SATNI, *who stands amazed.*]

ACT THREE

SCENE—*The yard in front of the potter's hut. On the right from the middle of the back of the scene to the footlights, the walls of the dwelling made of beaten clay. Two unequal doors. The wall is slightly raised, supporting a terrace where pottery of all kinds is drying in the sun. Left, a wall of loose stones high enough to lean on. Between the wall and the house an opening leading to an invisible inclined plane that descends to the Nile, the water and opposite bank of which are visible. Behind the house and on the right groups of lofty palms. The whole is abject misery beneath the splendor of a heaven blazing with light.*

KIRJIPA, *crouching down, is grinding corn between a large and a small stone.* SATNI *is seated on the wall dreaming.*

Kirjipa. Son.

Satni. Mother.

Kirjipa. And so you do not believe that when the moon grows little by little less, 'tis because it is eaten by a pig?

Satni. No, mother.

Kirjipa. Then what beast eats it?

Satni. None.

Kirjipa [*laughing*]. You have ideas that are not reasonable. What makes me marvel, is that your father seems to understand them. I must haste to make the bread, that he find it when he returns.

Satni. Here comes the messenger from Rheou.

Kirjipa [*horrified*]. The messenger of him who kills the gods.

Satni. We do not kill what has no life.

Kirjipa. I would not see him. [*She picks up her corn.*]

Satni. Why?

Kirjipa. Brrr!—[*To herself.*] To-morrow

I shall burn some sacred herbs here. [*She goes out.*]

[*The* Steward *enters.*]

Steward. Satni, I have been seeking you. Since this morning unhappy things have come to pass——

Satni. Yaouma is not in danger, or Mieris, or Rheou?

Steward. No. All three are safe in the palace.

Satni. Well?

Steward. You remember the order the master gave me this morning, after the death of the gods?

Satni. No.

Steward. Yes, to open his granaries to all.

Satni. Yes, yes, well?

Steward. When I went to obey, to my amazement I beheld the men stand by the door in earnest converse, then without entering they withdrew. This is what happened. They went to the house of the neighboring master, roused his servants and laborers, and strove to force them to overthrow the statues of his gods, and rob him of his corn. They killed his steward. Soldiers came—Nepk had been killed, others too. Then all were scattered. The master sent me to bid you reason with those whom you might find. Look! there are some who have taken refuge here! [*To some men who are outside.*] Enter—come—Satni would speak with you!

[Bitiou, Sokiti, *and* Nourm *appear behind the wall.* Bitiou *comes in.*]

Satni [*to* Bitiou.] Whither go you?

Steward. Whither go you? Whence come you?

Bitiou. I followed the others——

Steward. Whence come you?

Bitiou. I came back with the others, Sokiti and Nourm.

Satni. Where are they?

Bitiou. There.

Steward. Bid them enter.

Satni [*going to the door*]. Sokiti, Nourm, come.

[Sokiti *and* Nourm *enter awkwardly.*]

Steward. Why do you hide yourselves?

Nourm. We do not hide from you, but from the Lybian soldiers.

Satni. Why do you fear them?

Sokiti. Because they are chasing us.

Steward. And why are they chasing you?

[*The three men look at each other.*]

Satni. Bitiou, answer.

Bitiou. Bitiou knows not.

Steward [*to the others*]. You know it, you.

Nourm. They took us for the others.

Satni. What others?

Nourm. Perhaps they took us for the servants of the neighboring master.

Steward. They have done mischief, then, the servants of the neighboring master? [*Pause.*] Answer—you!

Nourm [*to* Satni]. They did that at his house, that you made us do at yours.

Steward. The priests heard of it?

Nourm. No, but the master sent for the soldiers.

Satni. Only for that!

Nourm. I know not.

Satni. Had there been nothing else, he would not have sent for the Lybian soldiers. He knew our projects—he is with us. There is something else, eh!——

[Bitiou *yawns loudly.*]

Sokiti. Yes.

Satni. What?

Sokiti [to Nourm]. Tell.

Nourm. They were angered with the master. He was bad, the master.

Steward. He is hard, but he gives much to those who have nothing.

Sokiti. He gave here, that he might receive hereafter.

Nourm. After his death.

Satni. And now he gives no more?

Nourm. Nothing.

Satni. Ah!

Bitiou. Nothing—and so, all stomachs empty, very much. [*He laughs.*]

Nourm. He gives only blows of the stick now.

Sokiti [*with conviction*]. One cannot live on that alone.

Nourm. And so his servants asked him for corn?

Bitiou. No good—only blows of the stick.

Steward. They *took* the corn that was refused them?

Bitiou [*laughing*]. Hunger! [*A gesture.*]

Satni. You knew they were going to do that?

Sokiti. Yes.

Satni. It was for that you went to join them?

Nourm. Yes.

Steward. Why?

Nourm. It came into our heads like this: better not take corn from the good master, but take it from the bad one.

Sokiti. Justice!

Bitiou [*to the* STEWARD]. You content. You still got all your corn.

[*He laughs, his comrades laugh with him.*]

Nourm. You, we like you.

Bitiou. You—good! We—good!

Sokiti. See!

Bitiou [*collecting two ideas*]. Wait: neighboring master bad. They bad. [*To the others.*] Heh?—Heh?—you see—Heh? Heh? [*All three draw themselves up proudly and laugh.*] And the steward he bad, he dead—well done!

Satni. What would he say?

Sokiti [*laughing*]. They took the steward and then—— [*Chokes with laughter.*]

Nourm. They gave him back all the blows of the stick they had had from him.

Satni. You saw that?

Nourm. Yes.

Sokiti [*proudly*]. Me too, me too——

Bitiou. I laugh very much—because—because—Steward, very big, strong, and then when very much beaten, fell down—fell on the ground—like me! like me! He, big, he fell down just the same—he like Bitiou—I very glad. [*During what follows he plays with his foot.*]

Steward. What they have done is bad.

Nourm. No. The steward had been happy all his life. He was old.

Sokiti. He was old. So 't is not bad to have killed him—He had finished—He was fat—and he had lost his appetite——

Nourm. Only just, he should leave his place to another.

Satni. We must not kill.

Sokiti. What does that mean?

Nourm. Yes, kill a good one, that is bad. But kill a bad one, that is good.

Satni. And if you are mistaken?

Sokiti. No, he is bad, I kill him.

Satni. What if he be not bad, and you think him so?

Sokiti. If he were not bad, I should not think it.

Steward. You do not understand—Listen, I am not bad, am I?

Sokiti. But we do not want to kill you.

Steward. Let me speak. You remember Kob the black. He thought me bad.

Nourm. Yes.

Steward. And if he had killed me?

Sokiti. We are not blacks——

Steward. You do not understand me. Consider. He thought me bad. I am not bad. What you were saying, would justify him if he had killed me.

[*They consider.*]

Sokiti. I understand. You say: If the slave had killed me—no, it is not that.

Satni. Human life must be respected.

[*Gravely they make sign of acquiescence, to escape further torment.* NOURM *picks up a package he had brought and turns to go out unobserved.*]

Steward. What are you carrying there?

Nourm. Nothing, 't is mine——

Bitiou. That is a necklace—show. [*Begins to open the package.*]

Nourm. Yes, a necklace.

Satni. From whom did you take it?

Nourm. From the neighboring master.

Satni. Do you think you did well?

Nourm [*hesitating*]. Why—yes.

Satni. You are wrong.

Nourm. Be not afraid, no one saw me.

Satni. It is wrong.

Nourm. No. What can wrong me, is wrong. Since no one saw me, they will not punish me. So it is not wrong.

Satni. Wrong not to you, but to the neighboring master.

Nourm. He has many others.

Sokiti. Has had them for years, he has! Nourm never had one. Not just. I, I never had, this—— [*He holds up a bracelet.*]

Satni. You have taken this bracelet!

Sokiti [*delighted*]. It is mine.

Satni. We are content.

[*They laugh.*]

Nourm. And Bitiou——

Satni and Sokiti. Yes, Bitiou——

Nourm. He took the best thing.

Steward. What?

Bitiou. A woman.

Steward. By force?

Bitiou. No woman would come willingly with Bitiou.

Sokiti. But she escaped from him.

Bitiou. Yes. [*He weeps.*]

Satni. You must give back the necklace and this bracelet to the neighboring master.

Nourm. Give back, but he has others!

Satni. You cannot make yourself the judge of that. If you were selling perfumes, for instance, would you think it natural that a man should come and take them from you, because you had plenty and he had none?

Nourm. You tell me hard things.

Satni. You must give back this bracelet, Sokiti.

Sokiti. Yes, master.

Satni. And you the necklace.

Nourm. Yes, master.

[*A sorrowful pause.*]

Satni. See, you are sad. You perceive that you did wrong.

Sokiti. Yes, we did wrong——

Satni. Ah!

Sokiti. We did wrong to tell you what we did, because you are not pleased.

Satni. 'Tis for your sake I am grieved.

Nourm. Then you have not told the truth; there is a hell, and there is an island of souls.

Satni. No.

Nourm. If the gods do not punish, and men, not having seen, do not punish either [*Pause.*] Well—I shall give it back.

Sokiti. I, I shall not give back. Not stolen. Another, a servant of the neighboring master stole the bracelet, not I!

Steward. Yet 'tis you who have it.

Sokiti. I took it from the other.

Steward. He let you do it?

Sokiti. Yes. Could not help it, he was wounded.

Satni. You should have succored him.

Sokiti. I did not know him.

Satni. He was a man like you.

Sokiti. There are plenty of them.

Satni. We must do good to others.

Sokiti. What good will that do to me?

Satni. You will be content with yourself.

Sokiti. I would rather have the bracelet——

Satni. It is only by refraining from doing one another harm that mankind may hope to gain happiness; nay more, only by lending one another aid. Do you understand?

Sokiti [*gloomily*]. Yes.

Satni. And you, and you——

Nourm and Bitiou [*in different tones*]. Yes, yes.

Steward [*to Sokiti*]. Repeat it then.

Sokiti. If men did not steal bracelets——

Steward. Well?

Sokiti. Bracelets—— [*He laughs.*]

Satni [*to* NOURM]. And you?

Nourm. He was wrong to take the bracelet.

Satni. Why?

Nourm. Because you are not pleased.

Satni. No, no, 'tis not for that.

Sokiti. I was not wrong——

Nourm. Yes! wait! I understand—If you steal, another may steal from you. Likewise if you kill——

Satni. Right. And why is it necessary to be good?

Nourm. Wait. [*To* SOKITI.] If you do good to one whom you know not, another who knows you not, may do good to you.

Steward. Ah!—Do you understand, Sokiti?

Sokiti. I think so.

Satni. Explain.

Sokiti [*after a great effort*]. You do not want us to steal bracelets from you——

Satni. I do not want you to steal from any one—Do you understand?

Sokiti. No.

Steward [*to* BITIOU, *who listens open-mouthed*]. And you?

Bitiou. I—I have a pain in my head——

[SATNI *comes to the* STEWARD. BITIOU *and* SOKITI *slip off.*]

Steward. Look at them——

Satni. The tree that was bent from its birth, not in one day can you make it straight.

Steward. We must leave it what it is, or tear it down?

Satni. No, we must seek patiently to straighten it. [*With feeling.*] And above all we must keep straight those that are young.

[*Cries are heard outside.*]

Steward. What cries are those?

Satni. Women in distress.

[YAOUMA *enters, leading* MIERIS. *Both are agitated.*]

Yaouma. Come, mistress—come—We are at the house of the potter, the father of

Satni—Satni, help—quick! quick! Run! your father, Satni!

Satni. Mieris, Yaouma, how come you here?

Yaouma. They will tell you—go!

Mieris. Fly to the rescue, he is wounded! —I have sent to the palace for those who drive out the evil spirits.

Yaouma. We were set upon by some men.

Mieris. He defended us—But they will kill him—go!

[SATNI *and the* STEWARD *seize some arms left by* NOURM *and run out.*]

Mieris. Yaouma! He is wounded! Wounded in saving us——

Yaouma. Alas!

Mieris [*listening*]. Who is there?

Nourm. I, mistress.

Mieris. Nourm! Run to the palace, bid them send hither those who drive forth evil spirits——

Yaouma. Alas! mistress, I do fear—already he has fallen—struck to earth.

Mieris. They will save him, they will bear him hither——

Yaouma. Will they bear him hither alive?

Mieris [*to* NOURM]. Run!—You hear! —Run to the palace, bid those who assist at the last hour be ready to come. If he have died defending us, the same honors shall be paid him as though ourselves were dead! Go! [NOURM *goes out. A pause.*] Now, Yaouma, lead me out upon the road to the Nile.

Yaouma. Mistress, you seek to die? Many then must be your sorrows!

Mieris. Alas! Alas! Why did you discover my flight? Why did you seek me, find me, and bring me back——

Yaouma. Had I not guessed your purpose?

Mieris. What have I left to live for?

Yaouma. You have lived all these years in spite of your affliction, what is there that is changed?

Mieris. What is there that is changed! You ask me what is changed! Until now I lived in the hope of a miracle.

Yaouma. Perhaps it would never have come.

Mieris. Even at my last hour I should have still looked for it.

Yaouma. Then you would have died believing in a lie—if what they say be true.

Mieris. What matter? I had smiled as I died, thinking death but the journey to a land where my lost child was waiting for me. The death of a child! No mother ever can believe, at heart, in that. It is too unjust—too cruel to be possible. One says to oneself: it is but a separation! Oh! Satni, thy doctrines may be the truth. But they declare this separation eternal; they make the death of our loved ones final, irreparable, horrible, therefore I foretell thee this: Women will never believe them! What is there that is changed?—Yesterday, children came playing close to us. You know how their cries and laughter made me glad—the voice of one of them was like the voice of mine. I made him come, I put out my hand, in the old way. I felt, at the old height, tossed hair, and the warmth of a living body. And I did not weep, but my voice spoke in my heart and said: "Little child, thy years are as many as his, whom she-who-loves-the-silence took from me. But in Amenti, where he is, in the island of souls, he is happier than thou, for he is safe from all the ills that threaten thee. He is happier than thou. He lives beneath a sun of gold, amid flowers of strange beauty, and perfumed baths refresh him. And when she-who-loves-the-silence takes me in my turn, *I shall see him, I shall see him* for the first time—and I shall fondle him as I fondle thee, and none, then, may put us asunder. Go, little child, the happy ones are not on this side of the earth! Now have I lost the hope of a better life before death, and the hope of a better life beyond as well. If you took both crutches from a cripple, he would fall. Only this twofold hope sustained me. They have taken it from me. And so, it is the end, it is the end—'tis as though I were fallen from a height, I am broken, I have no strength left to bear with life: I tell you, it is the end, it is the end!

Yaouma [*with intense fervor*]. Mistress, they speak not the truth!

Mieris. Our gods, did they exist, would already have taken vengeance.

Yaouma. Before the outrage, already, they had taken vengeance on you.

Mieris. Good Yaouma, you would give me back my faith, you who could not keep your own.

Yaouma. Mistress, I lied to you; nothing is destroyed in me.

Mieris. You refuse to give yourself in sacrifice!—Oh, you are right. . . .

Yaouma. I do not refuse.

Mieris. You do not!

Yaouma. No. Know you how I learned, a while ago, that you were gone?

Mieris. How?

Yaouma. I, too, was seeking to escape.

Mieris. You?

Yaouma. To go to the temple, to place myself in hands of the priests, to give to Ammon the victim he has chosen.

Mieris. Do you believe in all these fables still?

Yaouma [*in a low voice*]. Mistress, I have *seen* Isis.

Mieris. Has one of her images been spared, then?

Yaouma. It was not an image that I saw. It was Isis herself, the goddess—I have *seen* her.

Mieris. You—you have seen—what is it? I know not what you say—to *see*—that word has no clear sense for me.

Yaouma. She has spoken to me ——

Mieris. You have heard her voice ——

Yaouma. I have heard her voice.

Mieris. How! How!—You were sleeping —'twas in a dream ——

Yaouma. I did not sleep. I did not dream. I saw her. I heard her. I was alone, and I wept. A great sound filled me with terror. A great light blinded me. Perfumes unknown ravished my senses. And I beheld the goddess, more beauteous than a queen. Then all was gone ——

Mieris. But her voice ——

Yaouma. The next day she came again, she spoke to me, she called me by name and said to me: "Egypt will be saved by thee."

Mieris. Why did you not speak of it?

Yaouma. I feared they would not believe me.

Mieris. Oh, Yaouma, how I envy you! If you but knew the ill they have done me. They have half killed me, killing all the legends and all the memories that were mine. They made me blush at my simplicity. I felt shamed to have been so easily fooled by such gross make-believes. And now, what have I gained by this revelation? My soul is a house after the burning, black, ruined, empty. Nothing is left but ruins, ruins one might laugh at. [*In tears.*] I am parched with thirst, I hunger, I tremble with cold. They have made my soul blind, too. I cry out for help, for consolation. Oh! for a lie, some other lie, to replace the one they have taken away from me!

Yaouma. Why ask a lie? Why not forget what they have said? Why not recall what you learned at your mother's knee—Why not, yourself, set up in your heart again, those images which they threw down ——

Mieris. Yes! Yes! I will do it. They have awakened my reason, and killed my faith. I shall kill my reason, to revive our gods. Though I no longer believe, I shall do the actions of believers—and, if my god be false, I shall believe so firmly in him that I shall make him true!—Yes, the lowest, the most senseless superstitions, I venerate them, I exalt—I glory in them! The ugliest, the most deformed, the most unreal of our gods, I adore them, and I bow down before their impossibility. [*She kneels.*] Oh, I stifle in their petty narrow world, sad as a forest without birds! Air! Air! Singing! The sound of wings! Things that fly!

Yaouma [*kneeling*]. Let me be sacrificed!

Mieris. Let me have a reason for living!

Yaouma. I would give my life to the gods who gave me birth!

Mieris. I would believe that there is some one above men!

Yaouma. Some one who watches over us!

Mieris. Who will console us with his justice!

Yaouma. Some one to cry our sorrows to!

Mieris. Yes, some one to pray to, and to thank!

Yaouma [*sobbing*]. Oh! the pity of it, to feel we were abandoned!

Mieris [*throwing herself in* YAOUMA'S *arms*]. I would not be abandoned!

Yaouma. We are not! Gods! Gods!

Mieris. Gods! We need gods! There are too many sorrows, it is not possible this earth should groan as it groans beneath a pitiless heaven—Ammon, reveal thyself.

Yaouma. Isis, show thyself! Have pity! [*A pause. Then in a hushed voice.*] Mistress, I think she is going to appear to me again!—Isis!—mistress—do you hear——

Mieris [*listening*]. I hear nothing.

Yaouma. Singing—the sound of harps—'tis she——

Mieris. I do not hear——

Yaouma. She speaks! Yes—goddess!

Mieris. Do you see her?

Yaouma [*in ecstasy*]. I see her! She is bending down above us——

Mieris. O goddess!——

Yaouma. She is gone—Mistress, you could not see her, but did you hear the sound of her feet?

Mieris. Yes. I believe I heard it—I believe and I am comforted.

Yaouma. I am happy! To the temple! She beckoned me! To the temple! Come!

[*They go up.* RHEOU *meets them and leads them away.* SATNI *enters with some men bearing* PAKH, *who is wounded.* KIRJIPA *almost swooning follows, supported by some women who lead her into the house. The* EXORCIST, *who with his two assistants follows* PAKH, *takes some clay from a coffer carried by one of his men, shapes it into a ball, and begins, then, the incantation.*]

Exorcist. Pakh! Son of Ritii! Through thy wound an evil spirit has entered thee. I am about to speak the words that shall drive him out: "The virtues of him who lies there, and who suffers, are the virtues of the father of the gods. The virtues of his brow are the virtues of the brow of Thoumen. The virtues of his eye are the virtues of the eye of Horus, who destroys all creatures." [*A pause.*]

Pakh. Begone!

Exorcist. His upper lip is Isis. His lower lip is Neptes, his neck is the goddess, his teeth are swords, his flesh is Osiris, his hands are divine souls, his fingers are blue serpents, snakes, sons of the goddess Sekhet——

Pakh. Begone! I no longer believe in your power!

Exorcist [*taking a doll from the coffer*]. Horus is there! Ra is there! Let them cry to the chiefs of Heliopolis——

Pakh. Have done!

[*He knocks down the doll which the* EXORCIST *holds over him. The music stops suddenly.*]

Exorcist. The evil spirits are strongest in him. He will die. Only his son has the right to be with him at death.

[*All go out save* PAKH *and* SATNI.]

Satni. My father——

Pakh. You are there, my son—'tis well—I am glad—that that maker of spells is gone. [*Simply.*] Heal me.

Satni. Yes, father, you shall be healed. But you must have patience.

Pakh [*simply*]. Heal me, now, at once.

Satni. I cannot.

Pakh. Why do you not want to heal me?—See you not that I am wounded—I suffer—come, give me ease——

Satni. I would give all, that it were in my power to do so.

Pakh. You know prayers that our priests know not——

Satni. I know no prayers.

Pakh [*in anguish*]. You are not going to let me die?

Satni. You will not die—have confidence.

Pakh. Confidence? In what? [*A pause.*] You cannot heal me?

Satni. I cannot.

Pakh. All your knowledge, then, is but knowledge of how to destroy—My son!—I pray you—my blood goes out with my life—I do not want to die! I pray you—give me your hand. I seem to be sinking into night—hold me back—you will not let me die—your father! I am your father. I gave you life—hold me back—all grows dim around me—But at least do something—speak—say the incantations—[*He raises himself.*] No! No! I refuse to die! I am not old. [*Strongly.*] I will not! I will not! Do not let go my hand! I would live, live—All my life, I have worked, I have sorrowed, I have suffered—Satni—will you let me go before I share the peace and happiness you promised——

Satni. Oh! My father!

Pakh. You weep—I am lost, then—Yes—I have seen it in your eyes. And the silence deepens around me. To die—to die—[*A long pause.*] And after? [*Pause.*] And so this is a poor man's life! Work from childhood, blows. Then work, always, without profit. Only for bread. And still

work. For others. Not one pleasure. We die. And 'tis finished! You came back to teach me that—Work—blows—misery—the end. [*A silence.*] What did you come here to do? Is that your work? [*Strongly.*] Satni, Satni! Give me back my faith! I want it! Ah! Why were you born a destroyer? Is that your truth? You are evil—you were able to prove that all was false. Prove to me now that you lied! I demand it! Give me back my fâith, give me back the simple mind that will comfort me.

Satni. Do not despair——

Pakh. I despair because the happy fields do not exist——

Satni. Yes, father, yes, they exist——

Pakh. You lied, then!

Satni. I lied.

Pakh. They exist—and if I die——

Satni. If you die, you will go to Osiris, you will become Osiris.

Pakh. It is not true. 'Tis now you lie—There is no Osiris! There is no Osiris! Nothing! there is nothing—but life. I curse you, you who taught me that. [*He almost falls from his litter;* SATNI *reverently lifts him up.*] Ah! accursed! Accursed! I die in hate, in rage, in fear. Bad son! Bad man! I curse you, come near. [*Seizing him by the throat.*] Oh! If I were strong enough!—I would my nails might pierce your throat—Ah! Ah! accursed! [*He lets him go.*] All my life lost! All my suffering useless!—Forever—Never! Never! shall I know—Pity! [*He holds out his arms to* SATNI *and falls dead.*]

Satni [*horror-stricken*]. He is dead!—[*He lifts him reverently and lays him on the litter.*] Father! For me, too, at this moment there would have been comfort in a lie——

[*He weeps, kneeling by the body with his arms stretched over it.* KIRJIPA *appears at the door of the house. She comes near, then standing upright cries out to the four points of the horizon, tearing her hair.*]

Kirjipa. The master is dead! The master is dead! The master is dead! The master is dead!

[*The five mourners appear outside,* DELETHI, SITSINIT, HANOU, ZAYA, *and* NAGAOU.]

Kirjipa [*with cries that are calls*]. The master is dead! The master is dead!

Mourners [*entering*]. The master is dead! The master is dead!

[*Music till the end of the scene.*]

Kirjipa. O my father!

Mourners [*louder and in a chant*]. O my master! O my father!

Kirjipa. O my beloved!

Mourners. The she-wolf, death; the she-wolf, death; the she-wolf, death, has taken him!

[*They rush at the body, kissing it with piercing cries. They beat their breasts, uttering long cries, after silent pauses.* KIRJIPA *and another woman dance a hieratic dance, their feet gliding slowly over the ground. They bend to gather handfuls of earth, which they scatter on their heads as they dance. The cries are redoubled.*]

Kirjipa [*after bowing before the corpse*]. Go in peace towards Abydos! Go in peace towards Osiris!

All. Towards Abydos! Towards Osiris! To the West, thou who wast the best of men!

Kirjipa. If it please the gods, when the day of eternity comes, we shall see thee, for behold thou goest towards the earth that mixeth men.

All. Towards Abydos! Towards Osiris!

[*They make believe to bear away the corpse; ritual movements.*]

Kirjipa. O my husband! O my brother! O my beloved! Stay, live in thy place. Pass not away from the earthly spot where thou art! Leave him! Leave him! Wherefore are ye come to take him who abandons me.

Mourners [*in a fury of despair*]. Groans! Groans! Tears! Sobs! Sobs! Make, make lamentation without end, with all the strength that is given you.

[*The music stops.*]

Kirjipa [*to the corpse*]. Despair not. Thy son is there! [*They point to* SATNI.]

All. Despair not. Thy son is there!

Delethi. When I have spoken, and after me Hanou, and after her Nazit, thy son will speak the magic words, whose power shall make thee go even unto Osiris, before the two and forty judges. They shall place

thy heart in the balance, and thou shalt say: "I have done wrong to no man, I have done nothing that is abominable in the sight of the gods."

Satni [*to himself*]. No, I will not speak the magic words.

[*The music begins again.*]

All. Despair not! Thy son is there!

Hanou. Despair not, thy son is there. When I have spoken and after me Nazit, thy son will say the magic prayers whose power shall bring thee even unto Osiris, and thou shalt say: "I have starved none, I have made none weep, I have not killed, I have not robbed the goods of the temples."

Satni [*to himself*]. No, I will say no useless words.

All. Despair not! Thy son is there!

Sitsinit. Despair not! Thy son is there! When I have spoken he will say the sacred words whose power shall bring thee even unto Osiris and thou shalt say: "I did not filch the fillets from the mummies, I did not use false weights, I did not snare the sacred birds. I am pure——"

All. I am pure! I am pure!——

Kirjipa [*continuing*]. Give to me what is my due, to me who am pure. Give me all that heaven gives, all that the earth brings forth, all that the Nile bears down from its mysterious springs. Despair not! Thy son is there! Thy son will say the sacred words!

[*A pause. All look at* SATNI.]

Satni. No, I will not say words that are lies!

[*General consternation.* KIRJIPA *comes to him and lays her hands on his shoulders.*]

Kirjipa. Speak the sacred words!

Satni. No!

Kirjipa. Accursed!

[*She falls in a swoon. The women press round her.* SATNI *bursts into sobs.*]

ACT FOUR

SCENE—*The interior of a temple.*

Columns, huge as towers and covered with hieroglyphics. On the left the Sanctuary; in the foreground in a little nook, invisible to the faithful, but visible to the audience, is installed the machinery for the miracle, a lever, and ropes. Against the central pillar two thrones, one magnificent, that of the Pharaoh; the other simple, that of the High Priest.

The PHARAOH, *the* HIGH PRIEST, *an officer, an old man, and six priests discovered. When the curtain rises all are seated, the priests on little chairs between the two thrones.*

The Officer [*prostrated before the* PHARAOH]. Pharaoh! may Ammon-Ra preserve thy life in health and strength!

The Pharaoh [*with fury*]. My orders! My orders!

The Officer. Lord of the two Egypts, friend of Ra, favorite of Mentu, may Ammon——

The Pharaoh. Enough! my orders!

The Officer. I would have died——

The Pharaoh. The wish shall be granted, be assured, and soon! My orders! Dog, why did you not carry out my orders?

The Officer. Satni——

The Pharaoh. Satni! Yes, Satni, the impostor! Where is he?

The Officer. Pharaoh—may Ammon, Soukou Ra, Horus——

The Pharaoh. I will have you whipped till your blood run—Satni! Where is Satni? I sent you to seize him! Where is he?

The Officer. No one knows.

The Pharaoh. Scoundrel! You are his accomplice!

The Officer. O Ammon!

The Pharaoh. Did you go to the house of his father, to Rheou?

The Officer. We searched them in vain.

The Pharaoh. He has taken flight, then?

The Officer. I know not.

The Pharaoh. You are a traitor! You shall die! Take him out! And you others, hear the commands of the High Priest and begone.

High Priest. Let each fulfil the mission he is charged with. Let the young priests mix with the crowd, the moment it enters the Temple. Let them excite the people's fervor, that as many prodigies as possible may be won from the goddess. Now when you are gone the stones that screen the sanctuary will roll away before the Pharaoh and the High Priest; and, first by right, they shall behold the goddess face

to face. Humbly prostrated we shall speak to her the mysterious words that other men have never heard. Bow down before the Pharaoh, may he live in health and strength. [*All kneel and remain with their faces on the ground during what follows, save an old man whom the* HIGH PRIEST *calls to his side by a sign, and to whom he says in low tones.*] Let the man Satni be taken from the crypt where he is imprisoned. [*The old man bows.*] When I give the signal let them bring him here. While the Pharaoh goes in procession through the town let them do what I have told you. [*The old man bows.*] [*To the others.*] Rise! [*To the* PHARAOH.] Son of Ammon-Ra, bow down before him who represents the god. [*The* PHARAOH *rises and after a slight hesitation bows down before the* HIGH PRIEST.] Withdraw, we would pray. [*Motionless the* HIGH PRIEST *and the* PHARAOH *wait till the last of the assistants are gone.*]

The Pharaoh [*giving up his hieratic pose, angrily*]. I would all the flies of Egypt might eat thy tongue.

High Priest [*without feeling*]. The flies of Egypt are too many and my tongue is too small, for your wish to be realized, Pharaoh.

The Pharaoh. This is the result of my weakness!

High Priest [*with flattering unction*]. The Pharaoh, Son of Ammon-Ra—Lord of the two Egypts—Friend of Ra ——

The Pharaoh. Enough! Enough! We are alone. There are none whom your words may deceive. And your mock-reverence fools not me. You would not let me put Satni to death, your subtleties confused my mind, I gave in to you, and now Satni escapes us.

High Priest. You should not let anger master you for that.

The Pharaoh. Satni has foretold to thousands of ears that there will be no miracle.

High Priest. The miracle will be.

The Pharaoh. Who knows that?

High Priest. I.

The Pharaoh. Satni has declared he will enter the temple ——

High Priest. 'Tis possible.

The Pharaoh. He has declared he knows the secret recess, whence one of your priests makes the head of the image move.

High Priest. Most like he speaks the truth.

The Pharaoh. He declares the miracle will not take place. If the people suffer this disappointment, tell me what chance can there be for the war of conquest I would wage in Ethiopia?

High Priest. Why wage a war of conquest in Ethiopia?

The Pharaoh. I need gold. I need women. I need slaves. There will be a share of the spoil for your temple.

High Priest. I like not bloodshed.

The Pharaoh. The treasury is empty. Our whippings are useless now. Our blows no longer bring forth taxes. If the people lose confidence in the gods, what will happen to-morrow? Who will follow me, unless they believe the gods confirm my orders?

High Priest. Satni will not prevent the miracle.

The Pharaoh. What do you know of it?

High Priest. I know.

The Pharaoh. Is Satni dead?

High Priest. He lives.

The Pharaoh [*suddenly guessing*]. You are hiding him!

High Priest. Yes.

The Pharaoh. You knew I was about to rid me of him, and you took him to prevent me?

High Priest. Yes.

The Pharaoh. What do you intend?

High Priest. It shall be done with him as I wish, not as you wish.

The Pharaoh. His crime is a crime against Egypt.

High Priest. A crime against me. That is still more grave. Therefore be satisfied.

The Pharaoh. Why then all these ceremonies before you kill him?

High Priest. That all may know his faults.

The Pharaoh. Satni was one of yours, and you defend him.

High Priest. We must not make martyrs —if we can avoid it. In killing Satni you would have killed only a man. If what I dream succeed, I shall kill his work. That is a better thing.

The Pharaoh. What will you make of him?

High Priest. A priest.

The Pharaoh. A priest?

High Priest. He was initiated before he went away. He was then a young man, pious and wise. On his travels he lost some piety, and gained some wisdom.

The Pharaoh. Have I not always said: "it is not good to travel."

High Priest. I think like you. Travellers learn too much. Yet am I hopeful. I shall bring him back to our gods.

The Pharaoh. You will fail.

High Priest. He who for long has breathed the air of temples can never wholly clear his breast of it. If he give way, he shall never leave the house of the Gods again; if he be still rebellious, he shall leave to go to his death.

The Pharaoh. I order you to give Satni up to me.

High Priest. I would I might bow to your will. But he is a priest: his life is sacred. And I may not transgress the orders given me by the Gods.

The Pharaoh. Prate not of these follies to me—do you take me for one of your priests? Obey! I command you!

High Priest. Do you take me for one of your soldiers?

The Pharaoh. I command it.

High Priest. The gods forbid.

The Pharaoh. I laugh at your gods.

High Priest. Beware lest your people hear.

The Pharaoh. I would be master, in truth. And more, I refuse to submit to the humiliation that again you put on me a while ago.

High Priest. How should that humiliate you? Before you, the highest bow down.

The Pharaoh. Yes. And straightway, then, I must bow me down before you.

High Priest. You salute not me, but the god whom I represent.

The Pharaoh. I pay homage to the god, it is the priest who receives it.

High Priest [*faintly smiling*]. Rest assured! I pass it on to him.

The Pharaoh. And you mock me, besides! Oh! if I but dared to kill you, hypocrite!

High Priest. Vain man!

The Pharaoh. You tremble at sight of a sword, coward!

High Priest. Being a butcher, you know only how to kill.

The Pharaoh. Liar!

High Priest. Who made you Pharaoh?

The Pharaoh. Beware lest one day I have you thrown to my lions!

High Priest. Beware lest one day I strike the crown of the two Egypts from your head, telling the people the god has set his face against you! [*A pause.*] Come, we must work together. We complete each other. To govern men, we have both the reality of the evils you inflict on them, and the hope of the good I promise them. Believe me, we must work together. The day that one of us disappears, the fate of the other will be in jeopardy—I perceive they make sign to me. They think our prayers are long and fervent. The hour is come for you to receive the acclamation of your people, and follow them to the shrine of Isis—when Satni will not prevent the miracle, I pledge my word to that.

[*The cortège comes on and goes out with* PHARAOH. SATNI *is led before the* HIGH PRIEST.]

High Priest. You know me again!

Satni [*troubled*]. Yes, you are the High Priest.

High Priest [*with sweet gentleness*]. I, too, I know you again. Your father is a potter. You were brought up and taught by us. In the crowd of neophytes I singled you out by your gentleness, your great intelligence; and I saw you destined for the highest dignities. I esteemed you, I was fond of you. We took you from wretchedness. What you know, for the most part, you owe to us. This thing that you have done should anger me—I am only sad, my son. [*A pause.*] You are troubled.

Satni. Yes, I looked for threats, for torture. The kindness of your voice unmans me.

High Priest. Be not distressed. Forget who I am. None hear us. Let us talk together as father and son. Or better, since your learning makes you worthy, as two men. You have proclaimed broadcast that the miracle will not come to pass.

Satni. The goddess is stone. Stone does not move itself. The image will not bow its head unless man intervene.

High Priest. That is evident.

Satni. You admit it?

High Priest. To you, yes. We give to each one the faith he deserves. Had you remained with us, at each step in the

priesthood you would have beheld the gods rise with you, become more immaterial, more noble, as you became more learned. We give to the people the gods they can understand. Our god is different. He is the one who exists in essence. The one who lives in substance, the sole procreator who was not engendered, the father of the fathers, the mother of mothers. The one and only. And we crave his pardon for belittling him by miracles. But they are part of that faith which alone contents the simple-minded. You are above them—I admit freely that the miracle could be prevented. You declared it would not take place—you have found the means to make it impossible.

Satni [*suspecting the trap*]. I said that, left to herself, the goddess would not move.

High Priest. To say only that, would not have served you. You intended to prevent the miracle. Come, admit it—it is so.

Satni. Perhaps.

High Priest. By seizing you, I prevent your committing the sacrilege. Your purpose will not be realized. In an hour the festival of the Prodigy will take place, and you are my prisoner. It follows then, the miracle will be performed—you believe that, do you not?

Satni [*after a pause*]. Yes, I believe it.

High Priest. And so your cause is lost. [*A pause.*] Listen to me; the priests who have taken their final vows are as wise and as little credulous as you. I offer you a place among them. Return to us. A little wisdom banishes the gods—great wisdom brings them back.

Satni. I refuse.

High Priest. My son, my son, you will not cause me this sorrow. Think what you will drive me to, if you refuse—Satni, do not force me to send you before the tribunal, whose sentence must be death. Death, for you, so young, whose future is so bright!

Satni. I do not fear death.

High Priest. Besides—I mind me—you were betrothed to that little Yaouma whom the god has chosen as victim. You know she may be saved from the sacrifice, if she become the wife of a priest. They guarded her but ill at Rheou's house, she is here. I have seen her; she is kind and gentle, and you would lead a happy life with her.

Satni. Yaouma! Yaouma! [*He hides his face.*]

High Priest [*laying a hand on his shoulder*]. So that on one side is Yaouma's death and yours; on the other, happiness with her—and power. Say nothing. I speak as a father might, you can see. I say, besides, that you will better serve the crowd in leaving them their gods. I wish to convince you of it, and you will stay with us—weep no more. You will stay, will you not? Wait! Hear me, before you answer. You seek happiness for the lower orders? There is no happiness for them without religion. Already you have seen what they become, when it is taken from them. The riots of yesterday cost your father his life. He suffered much, they tell me. Is it true? I do not know the details. You saw him die, did you not? Tell me how it happened.

Satni. Ah! I was right. It was in truth torture that awaited me here. You have guessed you would gain nothing racking my body—you keep your torments for my heart.

High Priest. Have I said other than what is true? The conversions that your preaching made were followed by disorders—was it not then that your father was wounded? I knew him. He was a man, simple and good. You are the cause of his death, as you will be the cause of Yaouma's.

Satni. Peace! You would have my sorrows crush my will!

High Priest. I shall speak of them no more. But think of the people of Egypt, what evils you would bring on them! If you take away their religion, what will keep them virtuous?

Satni. What you call their virtue, is only their submission.

High Priest. You let loose their vilest instincts, if you remove the fear of the gods.

Satni. The fear of the gods has prevented fewer crimes than were needed to create it.

High Priest. Be it so. But it exists.

Satni. It is your interest to spread the belief, that the fear of the gods is a restraint. And you know that it is not. You do not leave the punishment of crime to the gods. You have the lash, hard labor in the mines; you have scaffolds, you have executioners. No one believes sincerely in

the happy life beyond the grave. If we believed, we should kill ourselves, the sooner to reach the Island of the Souls, the fields of Yalou.

High Priest. By what then are the appetites restrained?

Satni. By the laws, by the need of the esteem of others——

High Priest. We have just seen that, in sooth. So then it was virtue that the people showed yesterday, after you made them break their gods? They seemed to care little for the esteem of others, for they stole, they pillaged, they killed. Do you approve of that? Have they gained your esteem, those who have done what they have done?

Satni. Oh, I know! I know! That is your strongest argument. Creatures degraded by centuries of slavery, drunk with the first hours of freedom, commit crimes. You argue from this, that they were meant for slaves. Yes, it is true that if you take a child from the leading strings that upheld it, the child falls down. But you who watch over it, you rejoice at the fall, for then you can assert that the child must go back to its leading strings—and be kept in them till death.

High Priest. Then you declare that all supports must be suppressed? [*A pause.*] Religion is a prop. It soothes—consoles. He does evil who disturbs it.

Satni. Many religions died before ours. The passing of each caused the sorrows you foresee. Should we then have kept the first, to prevent some suffering?

High Priest. Ours is yet young, though so old; look in the halls of our temples, behold the countless thank-offerings brought there for prayers that were granted.

Satni. Your temples could not hold the offerings, unthinkable in number, that those whose prayers were not granted might have made, and who none the less prayed as well as the others.

High Priest. Even unanswered their prayers were recompensed. They had hope, and it is likewise a boon to the poor to promise them welfare in the world to come.

Satni. You promise them welfare in the world to come, to make them forget that all the welfare in this world is yours.

High Priest. Can you give happiness to all who are on earth? We are more generous than you; at least we give them consolation.

Satni. You make them pay dear for it.

High Priest. In truth the granaries of our temples are full to overflowing. Left to themselves, the people would not think of the lean years, in the years of abundance. We think for them, and they bring us, gladly, what they would refuse did they not believe they gave to the gods. We proclaim the Nile sacred; it is forbidden to sully its waters. Is that to honor it as a god? Not so, it is to avoid the plague. And all the animals we deified are those man has need of. You did not learn all things on your travels——

Satni. You would have the peasant remain a child, because you fear the reckoning he would demand of you, if you let him grow up. You know you could not stay him then by showing him the god-jackal, the god-ram, the god-bull, and the rest that do not exist.

High Priest. Are you certain they do not exist?

Satni. Yes.

High Priest. Know you where you are?

Satni. In the temple.

High Priest. In the temple; where you were brought up. There was a time when you dared not have crossed the first sacred enclosure. You are in the third. Look round! There is the holy of holies. At my will the stones that mask the entrance will roll back, and the goddess will be unveiled. Except the High Priest and the Pharaoh, no mortal, if he be not priest himself, may look on her and live—save at the hour of the annual Festival of Prodigies, which is upon us now. Do you believe that you can endure to be alone in her presence?

Satni. I do believe it.

High Priest. We shall see. If you be afraid, call and prostrate yourself. Afterwards you shall go and tell what you have seen, to those whom you deceived. [*The* High Priest *makes a sign. Total darkness. A peal of thunder.*]

Satni. Ah! [*Terrified, he leaps forward. A faint light returns slowly, the temple is empty.*] I am alone! [*He is terrified, standing erect against a pillar facing the audience.*] Alone in the temple, within sight of the goddess almost. I know 'tis but an image—yet am I steeped in terror,

even to the marrow of my bones. [*He utters an agonized cry.*] Ah!—I thought I beheld in the darkness—No—I know that there is nothing—Oh! coward nature! Because I was cradled amid tales of religion, because my father and my father's father, and all those from whom I come, were crushed by this terror even from the blackest night of time, I tremble, and my reason totters. All this is false, I know—the God obeys the priest. Yet, from these towering columns, horror and mystery descend upon me—[*A thunder clap brings him to his knees. The stones that mask the entrance to the sanctuary roll slowly back. He tries to look.*] The holy of holies opens—I am afraid—I am afraid—[*He mutters words, wipes the sweat from his brow with his hand. He trembles and falls sobbing to the ground. A long pause.*] 'Tis the beast in me that is afraid—Ah! coward flesh! [*Biting his hands.*] I shall conquer thee—I would chastise my weakness. I am shamed—I am shamed—In spite of all I will look her in the face. I have the will! but I must fight against so many memories, against all the dead whose spirits stir in mine. I shall conquer the dead. My life, and my will—courage!

[*With great effort and after many struggles he gains the mastery of himself, goes to the shrine and looks upon the goddess. The* High Priest *reappears touching him on the shoulder.*]

High Priest. Terror does not move you. Let us see if you be proof against pity. Come—[*He leads him to the side of the shrine, presses a spring and a door opens, revealing in the interior of the shrine the machinery of a miracle, a lever and cordage.*] Look! 'Tis by pressing this lever that one of ours, in a little while, will bring about the miracle. I leave you in his place. At my signal the doors of the sacred enclosure will open, and the people draw near the sanctuary. Listen to them. And if you are moved to pity by their prayers, you—*you* shall give them the consoling lie for which they pray.

Satni. There will be no miracle.

High Priest. Watch and hear. [*He leaves* Satni, *who remains visible to the audience. The stones roll back over the shrine. The* High Priest *makes a sign, other priests appear.*] All is ready?

A Priest. All.

High Priest [*to another*]. Listen.

[*He whispers to him. The* Priest *bows and goes out. While the crowd comes in later, this priest is seen to enter the hiding-place right, where he stands watching* Satni, *dagger in hand.*]

High Priest. Now, let them come in.

[*He makes a gesture and all disappear. A pitiable crowd bursts into the temple, bustling, running, filling all the empty spaces. Four men carry a litter on which is a beautiful young woman clothed in precious stuffs.* Meris, Yaouma, *and all the characters of the play come on.*]

Young Woman. Nearer, lay me nearer the goddess! She will drive forth the evil spirit that will not let me move my legs.

[*Cripples, people on crutches, creatures with hands or feet wrapped in bandages crowd past her.*]

A Blind Girl [*to him who leads her.*] When the stone rolls back and the goddess appears, watch well her face, to tell me if she will not give me back my sight.

[*A paralytic drags himself in on his hands.*]

The Paralytic. I would be quite near, quite near! In a little while I shall walk.

[*Two sons lead in their mother, who is mad, striving to calm her. A mother, with her child in her arms, begs the crowd to let her get near. A man, whose head is bandaged, and whose eyes and mouth are mere holes, hustles his neighbors. Many blind, and people borne on chairs.*]

A Woman. She will speak, she will say "yes." She will reveal herself again as protectress of Egypt.

Another. They say not. They say that great calamities are in store for us.

Another. If she answer not?

Another. Silence!

[*Music. The* Pharaoh's *procession enters. He is conducted down left where he remains invisible to the spectators. The* High Priest *mounts his throne. The people prostrate themselves.*]

High Priest. Ammon is great!

[*A pause.*]

The People. Ammon is great!

High Priest. The sanctuary is about to open.

Voices. The stones will roll back! I am afraid! The goddess will appear! We shall behold her! Hush! Hush!

[*The* HIGH PRIEST *lifts his hands to heaven.*]

A Priest [*in the recess, to some men ready to work the ropes, in a low voice*]. Now!

[*The men pull the ropes, the stones roll back. The crowd bow themselves flat on the ground. Those who cannot, hide their faces on their arms.*]

High Priest. Rise! Behold and pray! [*A smothered cry of terror rises, women mad with terror are seized with nervous fits. They are carried out.*] O goddess! Thy people adore thee, and humble themselves before thee!

All. Isis, we adore thee!

High Priest. This year, once more, show to us by that miraculous sign of thy divine head, that still thou art our protectress. [*The people repeat the incantation in a murmur.*] O goddess, if thou hast pity on those who suffer, thou wilt bend thy head. Pity! Pity! we suffer! The evil spirits torment us.

The People. We suffer! Drive forth the evil spirits!

High Priest. Neith! Mother of the Universe! The evil spirits torment us! Neith! Virgin genetrix! Isis, sacred earth of Egypt, bend thy head! Sati, queen of the heavens! Bend thy head!

The Mother. The soul of a dead man has entered the body of my child, O Isis! And he is dying. I hold him towards thee, Isis. Behold how he is fair, behold how he suffers. Look, he is so little. Let me keep him! Isis! Isis! Let me keep him!

All. Pity! Pity!

High Priest. Show us that thou dost consent to hear us! Isis, bend thy head!

Blind Girl. Open my eyes! Ever since I was born a demon held them closed. Let me see the skies of whose splendor they tell me. I am unhappy, Isis! He whom I love, he who loves me, I have not looked upon his countenance! I am unhappy, Isis!

All. Pity! Pity!

High Priest. Anouke! Soul of the Universe! Pity! We are before thee like little children who are lost.

The People. Yes! Yes! like little children who are lost!

The Son. For my father who is blind, Isis, I implore thee!

All. Isis! Hathor! Pity!

High Priest. Thmei, Queen of Justice! Mirror of truth! Bend thy head!

The Paralytic. I have offered up ten lambs to thee. Let me get up and walk!

The Man [*with the bandaged head*]. An unseen monster devours my face, making me howl with pain.

The Paralytic. I drag through the mire, like a beast unclean. Let me walk upright like a god.

The Two Sons [*of the mad woman*]. Behold our mother, Isis, behold our mother, who knows us no more, who knows not herself even, and who laughs! ——

The Mother. Isis! Thou art a mother. Isis, in the name of thine own child, save mine. Let me not go with empty arms, bereft of my tender burden. Thou art a mother, Isis!

High Priest. All! All! Pray! Supplicate! Fling you with your faces to the ground—yes! yes! again! Silence! She is about to answer. [*A long pause.*] Your prayers are lukewarm. Your supplications need fervor! Pray! Weep! Cry out! Cry out!

All. Isis! Drive out the evil spirits! Answer us! Answer us!

High Priest. Louder! Louder!

The People. Sorrows! Tears! Sobs! Cries! Have pity!

High Priest. Once more, though you die!

The People. Thou dost abandon Egypt! What ills will overwhelm us! Help! Help us! Have pity!

High Priest. Have pity! Have pity! [*Bursting into sobs.*] Oh! unhappy people, Isis, if thou dost abandon them.

Voices [*amid the sobs of the others*]. She hears us not! She answers not. Evil is upon us! Evil overwhelms us!

High Priest. Desperate! We are desperate!

All. We are desperate!

A Cry. Her head is bending! No! Yes!

[*Silence. Then a great cry of distress and disappointment.*]

High Priest. O mother! O goddess!

The Mother. O Isis! mother of Horus! the child god! Wilt thou let die my child? Behold him! Behold him!

Young Paralytic. Thy heart is hard, O goddess!

Paralyzed Man. Thou hast but to will it, Isis, and I walk!

The Man [*with the bandaged head*]. Heal my sores! I sow horror around me! Heal my sores!

High Priest. Answer us! Bend thy head!

All. Pity!

[*The crowd, delirious, cries and sobs in a paroxysm of despair.*]

Satni. Oh! the poor wretched souls!

[*He presses the lever. As the head of the statue bows, the people respond with one wild roar of acclamation.*]

ACT FIVE

SCENE—*Same as Acts I and II.*

The statues of the gods are set up again, in their places. Facing them a throne has been erected on which the HIGH PRIEST *is seated.* RHEOU, SATNI, MIERIS, YAOUMA, SOKITI, NOURM, BITIOU, *the* STEWARD *and all the women and servants of the household, and the laborers. When the curtain rises all are prostrate with their faces to the ground.*

High Priest [*after a pause*]. Rise! [*All rise to their knees. A pause.*] The divine images are again in their places. You have shown that you repent. You have begged for pardon. You have testified your horror of the terrible crime you were driven to commit. You await your chastisement. The gods now permit that we proceed to the sacrifice, that will bring about the overflowing of the Nile, and give for yet another year, life to the land of Egypt. She who was chosen, the elect, the savior, is she here?

Yaouma [*rising to her feet, radiant*]. I am here!

High Priest. Let her go to clothe her in the sacred robe. Form the procession to bear her to the threshold of the abode of the glorious and the immortal.

Yaouma. Come!

[*A number of the women rise and go out right with* YAOUMA.]

High Priest. To-day, at the hour when Ammon-Ra came forth from the underworld, I entered the sanctuary. Face to face with the god, I heard his words, which now you shall hear from me. These are the commands of the God. Rheou! [RHEOU *stands up.*] You have been to make submission to the Pharaoh—Light of Ra—you have implored his mercy. You have sworn on the body of your father, to serve him faithfully, and you have given that body to him in pledge of your obedience. You have denounced to his anger and justice those who conceived the impious plot to dethrone the Lord of Egypt. You have declared that if you did permit the images of the gods to be thrown down before you, it was because the spells of Satni had clouded your reason. Ammon has proclaimed to me that you are sincere! You are pardoned, on conditions which I shall presently impart. [RHEOU *bows and kneels down.*] Satni! [SATNI *stands up. He casts down his eyes, he is steeped in sorrow and shame.*] Satni, you have admitted and proclaimed the power of the gods, whom you dared to deny. You have bowed you down before them. Once, in the temple, you took the first priestly vows; your life is therefore sacred. But you stand now reproved. This very day you will quit Egypt. Withdraw from the Gods! [SATNI, *with eyes on the ground, withdraws, the people shrink aside to let him pass, abusing him in whispers, shaking their fists, and some even striking him. He goes to the terrace down left where he stands, hiding his face on his arm.*] Ammon has spoken other words. [*The people turn from* SATNI.] All you who are here, you are guilty of the most odious, the most monstrous of crimes. You are all deserving of death. Such is the decree of the God.

All. O Ammon! Pity! Pity! Ammon!

High Priest. Cease your sobs! Cease your cries! Cease your useless prayers! Hear the God who speaks through my mouth.

All. Be kind! Thou! Thou! Have pity! Beseech the God for us, we implore

thee! We would not die. Not death! not death! not death!

High Priest. Yes—I—I have pity on you. But your crime is so great! Have you considered well the enormity of your sin? None can remember to have seen the like. The Gods! To overthrow the Gods! And such Gods! Ammon and Thoueris! I would I might disarm their wrath. But what shall I offer them in your name that may equal your offence?

People. All! Take all we possess, but spare our lives.

High Priest. All you possess! 'Tis little enough.

People. Take our crops.

High Priest. And who then will feed you? Already you pay tithes. I will offer a fourth of your harvests for ten years. But 'tis little. Even did I say you would give half of all that is in your homes, should I succeed? And would you give it me?

People. Yes! Yes!

High Priest. Still it will not be enough. Hear what the God hath breathed to me. There must be prayers, ceaseless prayers in the temple. Every year ten of your daughters must enter the house of the God to be consecrated.

People. Our daughters! Ammon! Our daughters!

High Priest. The God is good! The God is good! Lo! I hear him pronounce the words of pardon. But further, you must needs assist the Pharaoh to carry out the divine commands. Ammon wills that the Ethiopian infidels be chastised. All who are of an age to fight will join the army, that is on the eve of departure.

People [*in consternation*]. Oh! the war! the war!

High Priest. Proud Ethiopia threatens invasion to Egypt. You must defend your tombs, your homes, and your women. Would you become slaves of the blacks?

People. No, no, we would not!

High Priest. You will go to punish the foes of your kings?

People. We will go.

High Priest. And what will be your reward? Know you not that victory will be yours, because the god is with you? And if some fall in battle, should we not all envy their fate, since they leave this world to go towards Osiris? The arrows of your foes will fall harmless at your feet, like wounded birds. Their swords shall bend on your invulnerable bodies. The fire they light against you will become as perfumed water. All this you know to be true. You know that your gods protect you. You know they are all-powerful, because, yesterday, you all did see how the stone image of the goddess Isis did bow, to show you she protects you.

People. To the war! To the war! To Ethiopia!

Satni [*leaping up to the terrace*]. I have been coward too long! [*To the crowd.*] The miracle of yesterday—'twas I—'twas I who worked it. [*General uproar.*]

High Priest. I deliver this man to you, and I deliver you to him. You will not let him deceive you twice.

[*Execrations of the people.* SATNI *cannot speak. The* HIGH PRIEST *is borne out on his throne accompanied by* RHEOU.]

Satni [*when the uproar subsides*]. I was in the temple ——

People. That is a lie!

Satni. It was I who made the head of the image bow.

People. He blasphemes. Have done! Have done! Let him not blaspheme!

Satni. It was I! And I ask your forgiveness.

A Man. Why should you do it, if you despise our gods?

Satni. I did it out of pity.

People. We have no need of your pity.

Satni. That is true. You have need only of my courage. And I failed you. I was touched by your tears. I was weak, thinking to be kind.

A Man. You are not kind. You would have handed us over to foreign gods.

People. Yes! yes! that is true!

Satni. I gave you the lie that you begged for. I wanted to lull your sorrows to sleep.

A Man. You have brought down on us the anger of the gods.

Another. The evils that crush us, 'tis you have let them loose on us.

All. Yes, yes! Liar! Curse you! Let him be accursed!

Satni. Curse me. You are right. I am guilty. I had not the strength to persevere; to lead you, in spite of your tears, to the summits I would lead you to. To still

a few sobs, to give hope to some who were stricken, I worked the miracle; and, beholding that false miracle, you made submission. I have confirmed, I have strengthened the empire of the lie.

A Man. 'T was you who lied.

Satni. I have given back your minds, for another age, to slavery and debasement. I have given back to the priests their power that was endangered. I have given them means to increase your burdens, to take your daughters, to send you to a war, covetous, murderous, and unjust.

A Man. You are a spy from Ethiopia!

Another. You are a traitor to your country!

All. Yes! a traitor! Death to the traitor!

Satni. And to defend your tyrants, you will kill men as wretched as yourselves, dupes like you, and like you enslaved.

A Man. We know you are paid to betray Egypt!

All. Yes, we know it! We know the price of your treason!

Another. You would sell Egypt, and 'tis to weaken us you would overthrow our gods.

All. Traitor! Traitor!

Satni. If I am a traitor, 't is to my own cause! But a while ago I was proud of my deed, thinking I had sacrificed myself to you. Alas! I only sacrificed your future to my pity. I wept for you; to weep for misfortune—what is that but an easy escape from the duty of fighting its cause? I pitied you. Pity is but a weakness, a submission—To perpetuate the falsehood of the miracle, and the life of atonement to come, is to drug misery to sleep.

A Man. Misery!—can you give us anything to cure it? [*They laugh.*]

Satni. They have implanted in you the belief that misery is immortal, invincible. By my falsehood, I too have seemed to admit this; and thus I have helped those in whose interest it is that misery should last for ever.

A Man. He insults the Pharaoh!

Another. Do not insult our priests!

Satni. Had there been no miracle, you would have despaired—you would have sorrowed. I ought to have faced that. I ought to have faced the death of a few, to save the future of all. We go forward only by destroying. What matter blood and pain! Pain and blood—never a child is born without them! I would ——

[*An angry outburst.*]

A Woman. Kill him! Kill him! He says we must put our children to death!

Satni. All are glorious who preach new efforts ——

People. Death! Death to the traitor!

Satni. All are infamous who preach resignation ——

People. Enough! Kill him! Death!

Satni. It is in this world that the wretched must find their paradise, it is here that every one's good must be sought with a zeal that knows no limit, save respect for the good of others.

[*A burst of laughter.*]

People. He is mad! He knows not what he says! He is mad!

[YAOUMA *is borne on right on a litter carried by young girls. She is decked out like an idol; she stands erect, half in ecstasy.*]

People. Yaouma! The chosen of Ammon-Ra! Glory to her who goes to save Egypt!

[*With jubilant cries the procession goes slowly towards the gates at the back, preceded and surrounded by musicians and dancers.*]

Satni. Yaouma! Yaouma! One word! One look of farewell! Yaouma! 'Tis I, Satni! Look on me!

[*The acclamations drown his voice.* YAOUMA *is wrapped in her soul's dream. She passes without hearing* SATNI'S *voice. The crowd follows her.*]

Mieris [*to* DELETHI *who supports her*]. Lead me to Satni—go—[*To* SATNI.] Satni, your words have sunk deep in my heart—Yaouma, they tell me, did not hear your voice. She is lost in the joy of sacrifice. The need to make sacrifice is in us all. If the gods are not, to whom shall we sacrifice ourselves?

Satni. To those who suffer.

Mieris. To those who suffer.

[*During this* BITIOU *has come slowly down behind* SATNI.]

Bitiou. Look! He too, he will fall down!

[*He plunges a dagger in* SATNI's *back.* DELETHI *draws* MIERIS *away.* SATNI *falls.*]

Satni [*raising himself slightly*]. It was you who struck me, Bitiou—[*He looks long and sadly at him.*] I pity you with all my heart—with all my heart. [*He dies.*]

[BITIOU *looks at the blood on the dagger, and flings it away in horror. Then he crouches down by* SATNI *and begins to cry softly.*]

Delethi [*to* MIERIS]. Mistress, come and pray!

Mieris. No, I do not believe in gods in whose name men kill.

[*Outside are heard the trumpets and acclamations that accompany* YAOUMA *to the Nile.*]

THE END

R. U. R.

By KAREL CAPEK

Translated from the Czech by PAUL SELVER

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KAREL CAPEK AND HIS PLAYS

KAREL CAPEK, the author of *R. U. R.*, was born in northern Bohemia on January 9, 1890, and was educated at the universities of Prague, Berlin, and Paris. He began his career in literature by writing sketches and stories in collaboration with his brother Joseph, and has ever since continued to produce remarkable short stories and sketches of travel that have placed him among the most gifted of Czecho-Slovakian writers. After a period spent in journalism, he became intensely interested in the theatre, and for a time assisted M. Jaroslav Kvapil in directing the Municipal Theatre of Vinohradz. He confesses that, from the first, he felt an "unappeasable desire of intellectual adventure" and "a passionate need of search". This intellectual adventurousness and passionate curiosity inspired his plays and help to explain their characteristic qualities. His first play, *The Brigand,* was published in 1920. With the production of *R. U. R.* his reputation was established as the foremost dramatist of Czecho-Slovakia. Following *R. U. R.* came *The Life of the Insects,* written in collaboration with his brother Joseph, which was produced in New York under the title of *The World We Live In.* This curious and brilliant social satire was suggested by J. H. Fabre's famous scientific work *Social Life in the Insect World,* and presents human beings in the guise of various kinds of insects, with satire upon human follies and vices. Its third act, at least, must be considered as among the most striking and effective of its kind in all modern drama. Capek's next play, *The Makropoulos Case* (published and produced in America as *The Makropoulos Secret*) is a study of the possible effects of longevity upon an individual whose life has been artificially prolonged to the age of over three hundred years. Expressed, like *R. U. R.,* in terms of melodrama, the play none the less embodies a serious ethical concept, presented with excellent theatrical effect.

It may very well be that *R. U. R.,* with its picture of mechanical men doing the work of the world and then turning upon their creators, was suggested by the old Jewish legend current in Prague—that of the "Golem," a man made by artifice, a kind of Frankenstein's monster without a soul, who turns Berserk and works havoc, until he is finally destroyed by his maker. However inspired or suggested, the play is perhaps the most remarkable example of the union of melodrama and social criticism. In its essence it is a devastating arraignment of modern mechanistic civilization. In mere form, in technique, it is unquestionably melodrama—its persons mere types, its situations, including its superb "curtains", essentially melodramatic. Perhaps in no other play is there so perfect a fusion of two such seemingly diverse qualities; for there can be no question of the timely importance and arresting quality of the idea, and certainly as little question as to the magnificently effective, though purely theatric, quality of the plot.

R. U. R. was produced first at the National Theatre, Prague, on January 26, 1921. Its success was immediate and pronounced, so great indeed that its fame quickly became international, and it was soon produced in Vienna, Berlin, Paris, London, New York, and other capitals. The first production in America was made in New York by the Theatre Guild on October 9, 1922. The play has continued a favorite in the professional theatre and has since been repeatedly produced by the "little theatres" of the United States.

CHARACTERS

HARRY DOMIN—*General Manager of Rossum's Universal Robots.*
SULLA—*A Robotess*
MARIUS—*A Robot*
HELENA GLORY
DR. GALL—*Head of the Physiological and Experimental Department of R. U. R.*
MR. FABRY—*Engineer General, Technical Controller of R. U. R.*
DR. HALLEMEIER—*Head of the Institute for Psychological Training of Robots*
MR. ALQUIST—*Architect, Head of the Works Department of R. U. R.*
CONSUL BUSMAN—*General Business Manager of R. U. R.*
NANA
RADIUS—*A Robot*
HELENA—*A Robotess*
PRIMUS—*A Robot*
A SERVANT
FIRST ROBOT
SECOND ROBOT
THIRD ROBOT

The action takes place on an island some time in the future

R. U. R.

ACT ONE

Central office of the factory of Rossum's Universal Robots. Entrance on the right. The windows on the front wall look out on the rows of factory chimneys. On the left more managing departments. DOMIN *is sitting in the revolving chair at a large American writing table. On the left-hand wall large maps showing steamship and railroad routes. On the right-hand wall are fastened printed placards. ("Robot's Cheapest Labor," etc.) In contrast to these wall fittings, the floor is covered with a splendid Turkish carpet, a sofa, leather armchair, and filing cabinets. At a desk near the windows* SULLA *is typing letters.*

Domin [*dictating*]. Ready?

Sulla. Yes.

Domin. To E. M. McVicker and Co., Southampton, England. "We undertake no guarantee for goods damaged in transit. As soon as the consignment was taken on board we drew your captain's attention to the fact that the vessel was unsuitable for the transport of Robots, and we are therefore not responsible for spoiled freight. We beg to remain for Rossum's Universal Robots. Yours truly." [SULLA, *who has sat motionless during dictation, now types rapidly for a few seconds, then stops, withdrawing the completed letter.*] Ready?

Sulla. Yes.

Domin. Another letter. To the E. B. Huyson Agency, New York, U. S. A. "We beg to acknowledge receipt of order for five thousand Robots. As you are sending your own vessel, please dispatch as cargo equal quantities of soft and hard coal for R. U. R., the same to be credited as part payment of the amount due to us. We beg to remain, for Rossum's Universal Robots. Yours truly." [SULLA *repeats the rapid typing.*] Ready?

Sulla. Yes.

Domin. Another letter. "Friedrichswerks, Hamburg, Germany. We beg to acknowledge receipt of order for fifteen thousand Robots." [*Telephone rings.*] Hello! This is the Central Office. Yes. Certainly. Well, send them a wire. Good. [*Hangs up telephone.*] Where did I leave off?

Sulla. "We beg to acknowledge receipt of order for fifteen thousand Robots."

Domin. Fifteen thousand R. Fifteen thousand R. [*Enter* MARIUS.]

Domin. Well, what is it?

Marius. There's a lady, sir, asking to see you.

Domin. A lady? Who is she?

Marius. I don't know, sir. She brings this card of introduction.

Domin. [*Reads the card.*] Ah, from President Glory. Ask her to come in.

Marius. Please step this way.

[*Enter* HELENA GLORY.]

[*Exit* MARIUS.]

Helena. How do you do?

Domin. How do you do. [*Standing up.*] What can I do for you?

Helena. You are Mr. Domin, the General Manager.

Domin. I am.

Helena. I have come——

Domin. With President Glory's card. That is quite sufficient.

Helena. President Glory is my father. I am Helena Glory.

Domin. Miss Glory, this is such a great honor for us to be allowed to welcome our great President's daughter, that——

Helena. That you can't show me the door?

Domin. Please sit down. Sulla, you may go.

[*Exit* SULLA.]

Domin. [*Sitting down.*] How can I be of service to you, Miss Glory?

Helena. I have come——

Domin. To have a look at our famous works where people are manufactured. Like all visitors. Well, there is no objection.

Helena. I thought it was forbidden to——

Domin. To enter the factory. Yes, of course. Everybody comes here with someone's visiting card, Miss Glory.

Helena. And you show them——

Domin. Only certain things. The manufacture of artificial people is a secret process.

Helena. If you only knew how enormously that——

Domin. Interests me. Europe's talking about nothing else.

Helena. Why don't you let me finish speaking?

Domin. I beg your pardon. Did you want to say something different?

Helena. I only wanted to ask——

Domin. Whether I could make a special exception in your case and show you our factory. Why, certainly, Miss Glory.

Helena. How do you know I wanted to say that?

Domin. They all do. But we shall consider it a special honor to show you more than we do the rest.

Helena. Thank you.

Domin. But you must agree not to divulge the least . . .

Helena [*standing up and giving him her hand*]. My word of honor.

Domin. Thank you. Won't you raise your veil?

Helena. Of course. You want to see whether I'm a spy or not. I beg your pardon.

Domin. What is it?

Helena. Would you mind releasing my hand?

Domin [*releasing it*]. I beg your pardon.

Helena [*raising her veil*]. How cautious you have to be here, don't you?

Domin. [*observing her with deep interest*]. Hm, of course—we—that is——

Helena. But what is it? What's the matter?

Domin. I'm remarkably pleased. Did you have a pleasant crossing?

Helena. Yes.

Domin. No difficulty?

Helena. Why?

Domin. What I mean to say is—you're so young.

Helena. May we go straight into the factory?

Domin. Yes. Twenty-two, I think.

Helena. Twenty-two what?

Domin. Years.

Helena. Twenty-one. Why do you want to know?

Domin. Because—as—[*with enthusiasm*] you will make a long stay, won't you?

Helena. That depends on how much of the factory you show me.

Domin. Oh, hang the factory. Oh, no, no, you shall see everything, Miss Glory. Indeed you shall. Won't you sit down?

Helena [*crossing to couch and sitting*]. Thank you.

Domin. But first would you like to hear the story of the invention?

Helena. Yes, indeed.

Domin [*observes* HELENA *with rapture and reels off rapidly*]:

It was in the year 1920 that old Rossum, the great physiologist, who was then quite a young scientist, took himself to this distant island for the purpose of studying the ocean fauna, full stop. On this occasion he attempted by chemical synthesis to imitate the living matter known as protoplasm until he suddenly discovered a substance which behaved exactly like living matter although its chemical composition was different. That was in the year of 1932, exactly four hundred years after the discovery of America. Whew!

Helena. Do you know that by heart?

Domin. Yes. You see physiology is not in my line. Shall I go on?

Helena. Yes, please.

Domin. And then, Miss Glory, old Rossum wrote the following among his chemical specimens: "Nature has found only one method of organizing living matter. There is, however, another method, more simple, flexible and rapid, which has not yet occurred to nature at all. This second process by which life can be developed was discovered by me to-day." Now imagine him, Miss Glory, writing those wonderful words over some colloidal mess that a dog wouldn't look at. Imagine him sitting over a test tube, and thinking how the whole tree of life would grow from it, how all animals would proceed from it, beginning with some sort of beetle and ending with a man. A man of different substance from us. Miss Glory, that was a tremendous moment.

Helena. Well?

Domin. Now, the thing was how to get the life out of the test tubes, and hasten development and form organs, bones and nerves, and so on, and find such substances

as catalytics, enzymes, hormones, and so forth, in short—you understand?

Helena. Not much, I'm afraid.

Domin. Never mind. You see with the help of his tinctures he could make whatever he wanted. He could have produced a Medusa with the brain of a Socrates or a worm fifty yards long. But being without a grain of humor, he took it into his head to make a vertebrate or perhaps a man. This artificial living matter of his had a raging thirst for life. It didn't mind being sewn or mixed together. That couldn't be done with natural albumen. And that's how he set about it.

Helena. About what?

Domin. About imitating nature. First of all he tried making an artificial dog. That took him several years and resulted in a sort of stunted calf which died in a few days. I'll show it to you in the museum. And then old Rossum started on the manufacture of man.

Helena. And I must divulge this to nobody?

Domin. To nobody in the world.

Helena. What a pity that it's to be found in all the school books of both Europe and America.

Domin. Yes. But do you know what isn't in the school books? That old Rossum was mad. Seriously, Miss Glory, you must keep this to yourself. The old crank wanted to actually make people.

Helena. But you do make people.

Domin. Approximately, Miss Glory. But old Rossum meant it literally. He wanted to become a sort of scientific substitute for God. He was a fearful materialist, and that's why he did it all. His sole purpose was nothing more nor less than to prove that God was no longer necessary. Do you know anything about anatomy?

Helena. Very little.

Domin. Neither do I. Well, he then decided to manufacture everything as in the human body. I'll show you in the museum the bungling attempt it took him ten years to produce. It was to have been a man, but it lived for three days only. Then up came young Rossum, an engineer. He was a wonderful fellow, Miss Glory. When he saw what a mess of it the old man was making, he said: "It's absurd to spend ten years making a man. If you can't make him quicker than nature, you might as well shut up shop." Then he set about learning anatomy himself.

Helena. There's nothing about that in the school books.

Domin. No. The school books are full of paid advertisements, and rubbish at that. What the school books say about the united efforts of the two great Rossums is all a fairy tale. They used to have dreadful rows. The old atheist hadn't the slightest conception of industrial matters, and the end of it was that young Rossum shut him up in some laboratory or other and let him fritter the time away with his monstrosities, while he himself started on the business from an engineer's point of view. Old Rossum cursed him and before he died he managed to blotch up two physiological horrors. Then one day they found him dead in the laboratory. And that's his whole story.

Helena. And what about the young man?

Domin. Well, any one who has looked into human anatomy will have seen at once that man is too complicated, and that a good engineer could make him more simply. So young Rossum began to overhaul anatomy and tried to see what could be left out or simplified. In short—but this isn't boring you, Miss Glory?

Helena. No indeed. You're—it's awfully interesting.

Domin. So young Rossum said to himself: "A man is something that feels happy, plays the piano, likes going for a walk, and in fact, wants to do a whole lot of things that are really unnecessary."

Helena. Oh.

Domin. That are unnecessary when he wants, let us say, to weave or count. Do you play the piano?

Helena. Yes.

Domin. That's good. But a working machine must not play the piano, must not feel happy, must not do a whole lot of other things. A gasoline motor must not have tassels or ornaments, Miss Glory. And to manufacture artificial workers is the same thing as to manufacture gasoline motors. The process must be of the simplest, and the product of the best from a practical point of view. What sort of worker do you think is the best from a practical point of view?

Helena. What?

Domin. What sort of worker do you think is the best from a practical point of view?

Helena. Perhaps the one who is most honest and hardworking.

Domin. No; the one that is the cheapest. The one whose requirements are the smallest. Young Rossum invented a worker with the minimum amount of requirements. He had to simplify him. He rejected everything that did not contribute directly to the progress of work—everything that makes man more expensive. In fact, he rejected man and made the Robot. My dear Miss Glory, the Robots are not people. Mechanically they are more perfect than we are, they have an enormously developed intelligence, but they have no soul.

Helena. How do you know they've no soul?

Domin. Have you ever seen what a Robot looks like inside?

Helena. No.

Domin. Very neat, very simple. Really, a beautiful piece of work. Not much in it, but everything in flawless order. The product of an engineer is technically at a higher pitch of perfection than a product of nature.

Helena. But man is supposed to be the product of God.

Domin. All the worse. God hasn't the least notion of modern engineering. Would you believe that young Rossum then proceeded to play at being God?

Helena. How do you mean?

Domin. He began to manufacture Super-Robots. Regular giants they were. He tried to make them twelve feet tall. But you wouldn't believe what a failure they were.

Helena. A failure?

Domin. Yes. For no reason at all their limbs used to keep snapping off. Evidently our planet is too small for giants. Now we only make Robots of normal size and of very high class human finish.

Helena. I saw the first Robots at home. The town counsel bought them for—I mean engaged them for work.

Domin. Bought them, dear Miss Glory. Robots are bought and sold.

Helena. These were employed as street sweepers. I saw them sweeping. They were so strange and quiet.

Domin. Rossum's Universal Robot factory doesn't produce a uniform brand of Robots. We have Robots of finer and coarser grades. The best will live about twenty years. [*He rings for* Marius.]

Helena. Then they die?

Domin. Yes, they get used up.

[*Enter* Marius.]

Domin. Marius, bring in samples of the Manual Labor Robot. [*Exit* Marius.]

Domin. I'll show you specimens of the two extremes. This first grade is comparatively inexpensive and is made in vast quantities.

[Marius *reënters with two Manual Labor Robots.*]

Domin. There you are; as powerful as a small tractor. Guaranteed to have average intelligence. That will do, Marius.

[Marius *exits with Robots.*]

Helena. They make me feel so strange.

Domin [*rings*]. Did you see my new typist? [*He rings for* Sulla.]

Helena. I didn't notice her.

[*Enter* Sulla.]

Domin. Sulla, let Miss Glory see you.

Helena. So pleased to meet you. You must find it terribly dull in this out-of-the-way spot, don't you?

Sulla. I don't know, Miss Glory.

Helena. Where do you come from?

Sulla. From the factory.

Helena. Oh, you were born there?

Sulla. I was made there.

Helena. What?

Domin [*laughing*]. Sulla is a Robot, best grade.

Helena. Oh, I beg your pardon.

Domin. Sulla isn't angry. See, Miss Glory, the kind of skin we make. [*Feels the skin on* Sulla's *face.*] Feel her face.

Helena. Oh, no, no.

Domin. You wouldn't know that she's made of different material from us, would you? Turn round, Sulla.

Helena. Oh, stop, stop.

Domin. Talk to Miss Glory, Sulla.

Sulla. Please sit down. [Helena *sits.*] Did you have a pleasant crossing?

Helena. Oh, yes, certainly.

Sulla. Don't go back on the *Amelia,* Miss Glory. The barometer is falling steadily.

Wait for the *Pennsylvania*. That's a good, powerful vessel.

Domin. What's its speed?

Sulla. Twenty knots. Fifty thousand tons. One of the latest vessels, Miss Glory.

Helena. Thank you.

Sulla. A crew of fifteen hundred, Captain Harpy, eight boilers——

Domin. That'll do, Sulla. Now show us your knowledge of French.

Helena. You know French?

Sulla. I know four languages. I can write: Dear Sir, Monsieur, Geehrter Herr, Cteny pane.

Helena [*jumping up*]. Oh, that's absurd! Sulla isn't a Robot. Sulla is a girl like me. Sulla, this is outrageous! Why do you take part in such a hoax?

Sulla. I am a Robot.

Helena. No, no, you are not telling the truth. I know they've forced you to do it for an advertisement. Sulla, you are a girl like me, aren't you?

Domin. I'm sorry, Miss Glory. Sulla is a Robot.

Helena. It's a lie!

Domin. What? [*Rings.*] Excuse me, Miss Glory, then I must convince you.

[*Enter* Marius.]

Domin. Marius, take Sulla into the dissecting room, and tell them to open her up at once.

Helena. Where?

Domin. Into the dissecting room. When they've cut her open, you can go and have a look.

Helena. No, no!

Domin. Excuse me, you spoke of lies.

Helena. You wouldn't have her killed?

Domin. You can't kill machines.

Helena. Don't be afraid, Sulla, I won't let you go. Tell me, my dear, are they always so cruel to you? You mustn't put up with it, Sulla. You mustn't.

Sulla. I am a Robot.

Helena. That doesn't matter. Robots are just as good as we are. Sulla, you wouldn't let yourself be cut to pieces?

Sulla. Yes.

Helena. Oh, you're not afraid of death, then?

Sulla. I cannot tell, Miss Glory.

Helena. Do you know what would happen to you in there?

Sulla. Yes, I should cease to move.

Helena. How dreadful!

Domin. Marius, tell Miss Glory what you are.

Marius. Marius, the Robot.

Domin. Would you take Sulla into the dissecting room?

Marius. Yes.

Domin. Would you be sorry for her?

Marius. I cannot tell.

Domin. What would happen to her?

Marius. She would cease to move. They would put her into the stamping mill.

Domin. That is death, Marius. Aren't you afraid of death?

Marius. No.

Domin. You see, Miss Glory, the Robots have no interest in life. They have no enjoyments. They are less than so much grass.

Helena. Oh, stop. Send them away.

Domin. Marius, Sulla, you may go.

[*Exeunt* Sulla *and* Marius.]

Helena. How terrible! It's outrageous what you are doing.

Domin. Why outrageous?

Helena. I don't know, but it is. Why do you call her Sulla?

Domin. Isn't it a nice name?

Helena. It's a man's name. Sulla was a Roman general.

Domin. Oh, we thought that Marius and Sulla were lovers.

Helena. Marius and Sulla were generals and fought against each other in the year— I've forgotten now.

Domin. Come here to the window.

Helena. What?

Domin. Come here. What do you see?

Helena. Bricklayers.

Domin. Robots. All our work people are Robots. And down there, can you see anything?

Helena. Some sort of office.

Domin. A counting house. And in it——

Helena. A lot of officials.

Domin. Robots. All our officials are Robots. And when you see the factory——

[*Factory whistle blows.*]

Domin. Noon. We have to blow the whistle because the Robots don't know when to stop work. In two hours I will show you the kneading trough.

Helena. Kneading trough?

Domin. The pestle for beating up the paste. In each one we mix the ingredients

for a thousand Robots at one operation. Then there are the vats for the preparation of liver, brains, and so on. Then you will see the bone factory. After that I'll show you the spinning mill.

Helena. Spinning mill?

Domin. Yes. For weaving nerves and veins. Miles and miles of digestive tubes pass through it at a time.

Helena. Mayn't we talk about something else?

Domin. Perhaps it would be better. There's only a handful of us among a hundred thousand Robots, and not one woman. We talk about nothing but the factory all day, every day. It's just as if we were under a curse, Miss Glory.

Helena. I'm sorry I said that you were lying. [*A knock at the door.*]

Domin. Come in.

[*From the right enter* MR. FABRY, DR. GALL, DR. HALLEMEIER, MR. ALQUIST.]

Dr. Gall. I beg your pardon, I hope we don't intrude.

Domin. Come in. Miss Glory, here are Alquist, Fabry, Gall, Hallemeier. This is President Glory's daughter.

Helena. How do you do.

Fabry. We had no idea——

Dr. Gall. Highly honored, I'm sure——

Alquist. Welcome, Miss Glory.

[BUSMAN *rushes in from the right.*]

Busman. Hello, what's up?

Domin. Come in, Busman. This is Busman, Miss Glory. This is President Glory's daughter.

Busman. By jove, that's fine! Miss Glory, may we send a cablegram to the papers about your arrival?

Helena. No, no, please don't.

Domin. Sit down, please, Miss Glory.

Busman. Allow me——

[*Dragging up armchairs.*]

Dr. Gall. Please——

Fabry. Excuse me——

Alquist. What sort of a crossing did you have?

Dr. Gall. Are you going to stay long?

Fabry. What do you think of the factory, Miss Glory?

Hallemeier. Did you come over on the *Amelia?*

Domin. Be quiet and let Miss Glory speak.

Helena [to DOMIN]. What am I to speak to them about?

Domin. Anything you like.

Helena. Shall . . . may I speak quite frankly?

Domin. Why, of course.

Helena [*wavering, then in desperate resolution*]. Tell me, doesn't it ever distress you the way you are treated?

Fabry. By whom, may I ask?

Helena. Why, everybody.

Alquist. Treated?

Dr. Gall. What makes you think——?

Helena. Don't you feel that you might be living a better life?

Dr. Gall. Well, that depends on what you mean, Miss Glory.

Helena. I mean that it's perfectly outrageous. It's terrible. [*Standing up.*] The whole of Europe is talking about the way you're being treated. That's why I came here, to see for myself, and it's a thousand times worse than could have been imagined. How can you put up with it?

Alquist. Put up with what?

Helena. Good heavens, you are living creatures, just like us, like the whole of Europe, like the whole world. It's disgraceful that you must live like this.

Busman. Good gracious, Miss Glory.

Fabry. Well, she's not far wrong. We live here just like red Indians.

Helena. Worse than red Indians. May I, oh, may I call you brothers?

Busman. Why not?

Helena. Brothers, I have not come here as the President's daughter. I have come on behalf of the Humanity League. Brothers, the Humanity League now has over two hundred thousand members. Two hundred thousand people are on your side, and offer you their help.

Busman. Two hundred thousand people! Miss Glory, that's a tidy lot. Not bad.

Fabry. I'm always telling you there's nothing like good old Europe. You see, they've not forgotten us. They're offering us help.

Dr. Gall. What help? A theatre, for instance?

Hallemeier. An orchestra?

Helena. More than that.

Alquist. Just you?

Helena. Oh, never mind about me. I'll stay as long as it is necessary.

Busman. By jove, that's good.

Alquist. Domin, I'm going to get the best room ready for Miss Glory.

Domin. Just a minute. I'm afraid that Miss Glory is of the opinion that she has been talking to Robots.

Helena. Of course.

Domin. I'm sorry. These gentlemen are human beings just like us.

Helena. You're not Robots?

Busman. Not Robots.

Hallemeier. Robots indeed!

Dr. Gall. No, thanks.

Fabry. Upon my honor, Miss Glory, we aren't Robots.

Helena [to Domin]. Then why did you tell me that all your officials are Robots?

Domin. Yes, the officials, but not the managers. Allow me, Miss Glory: this is Mr. Fabry, General Technical Manager of R. U. R.; Dr. Gall, Head of the Psychological and Experimental Department; Dr. Hallemeier, Head of the Institute for the Psychological Training of Robots; Consul Busman, General Business Manager; and Alquist, Head of the Building Department of R. U. R.

Alquist. Just a builder.

Helena. Excuse me, gentlemen, for—for—— Have I done something dreadful?

Alquist. Not at all, Miss Glory. Please sit down.

Helena. I'm a stupid girl. Send me back by the first ship.

Dr. Gall. Not for anything in the world, Miss Glory. Why should we send you back?

Helena. Because you know I've come to disturb your Robots for you.

Domin. My dear Miss Glory, we've had close upon a hundred saviours and prophets here. Every ship brings us some. Missionaries, anarchists, Salvation Army, all sorts. It's astonishing what a number of churches and idiots there are in the world.

Helena. And you let them speak to the Robots?

Domin. So far we've let them all; why not? The Robots remember everything, but that's all. They don't even laugh at what the people say. Really, it is quite incredible. If it would amuse you, Miss Glory, I'll take you over to the Robot warehouse. It holds about three hundred thousand of them.

Busman. Three hundred and forty-seven thousand.

Domin. Good! And you can say whatever you like to them. You can read the Bible, recite the multiplication table, whatever you please. You can even preach to them about human rights.

Helena. Oh, I think that if you were to show them a little love——

Fabry. Impossible, Miss Glory. Nothing is harder to like than a Robot.

Helena. What do you make them for, then?

Busman. Ha, ha, ha, that's good! What are Robots made for?

Fabry. For work, Miss Glory! One Robot can replace two and a half workmen. The human machine, Miss Glory, was terribly imperfect. It had to be removed sooner or later.

Busman. It was too expensive.

Fabry. It was not effective. It no longer answers the requirements of modern engineering. Nature has no idea of keeping pace with modern labor. For example: from a technical point of view, the whole of childhood is a sheer absurdity. So much time lost. And then again——

Helena. Oh, no! No!

Fabry. Pardon me. But kindly tell me what is the real aim of your League—the . . . the Humanity League.

Helena. Its real purpose is to—to protect the Robots—and—and ensure good treatment for them.

Fabry. Not a bad object, either. A machine has to be treated properly. Upon my soul, I approve of that. I don't like damaged articles. Please, Miss Glory, enroll us all as contributing, or regular, or foundation members of your League.

Helena. No, you don't understand me. What we really want is to—to liberate the Robots.

Hallemeier. How do you propose to do that?

Helena. They are to be—to be dealt with like human beings.

Hallemeier. Aha. I suppose they're to vote? To drink beer? to order us about?

Helena. Why shouldn't they drink beer?

Hallemeier. Perhaps they're even to receive wages?

Helena. Of course they are.

Hallemeier. Fancy that, now! And what would they do with their wages, pray?

Helena. They would buy—what they need . . . what pleases them.

Hallemeier. That would be very nice, Miss Glory, only there's nothing that does please the Robots. Good heavens, what are they to buy? You can feed them on pineapples, straw, whatever you like. It's all the same to them, they've no appetite at all. They've no interest in anything, Miss Glory. Why, hang it all, nobody's ever yet seen a Robot smile.

Helena. Why . . . why don't you make them happier?

Hallemeier. That wouldn't do, Miss Glory. They are only workmen.

Helena. Oh, but they're so intelligent.

Hallemeier. Confoundedly so, but they're nothing else. They've no will of their own. No passion. No soul.

Helena. No love?

Hallemeier. Love? Rather not. Robots don't love. Not even themselves.

Helena. Nor defiance?

Hallemeier. Defiance? I don't know. Only rarely, from time to time.

Helena. What?

Hallemeier. Nothing particular. Occasionally they seem to go off their heads. Something like epilepsy, you know. It's called Robot's cramp. They'll suddenly sling down everything they're holding, stand still, gnash their teeth—and then they have to go into the stamping-mill. It's evidently some breakdown in the mechanism.

Domin. A flaw in the works that has to be removed.

Helena. No, no, that's the soul.

Fabry. Do you think that the soul first shows itself by a gnashing of teeth?

Helena. Perhaps it's a sort of revolt. Perhaps it's just a sign that there's a struggle within. Oh, if you could infuse them with it!

Domin. That'll be remedied, Miss Glory. Dr. Gall is just making some experiments——

Dr. Gall. Not with regard to that, Domin. At present I am making pain-nerves.

Helena. Pain-nerves?

Dr. Gall. Yes, the Robots feel practically no bodily pain. You see, young Rossum provided them with too limited a nervous system. We must introduce suffering.

Helena. Why do you want to cause them pain?

Dr. Gall. For industrial reasons, Miss Glory. Sometimes a Robot does damage to himself because it doesn't hurt him. He puts his hand into the machine, breaks his finger, smashes his head, it's all the same to him. We must provide them with p a i n. That's an automatic protection against damage.

Helena. Will they be happier when they feel pain?

Dr. Gall. On the contrary; but they will be more perfect from a technical point of view.

Helena. Why don't you create a soul for them?

Dr. Gall. That's not in our power.

Fabry. That's not in our interest.

Busman. That would increase the cost of production. Hang it all, my dear young lady, we turn them out at such a cheap rate. A hundred and fifty dollars each fully dressed, and fifteen years ago they cost ten thousand. Five years ago we used to buy the clothes for them. To-day we have our own weaving mill, and now we even export cloth five times cheaper than other factories. What do you pay a yard for cloth, Miss Glory?

Helena. I don't know really, I've forgotten.

Busman. Good gracious, and you want to found a Humanity League? It only costs a third now, Miss Glory. All prices are to-day a third of what they were and they'll fall still lower, lower, lower, like that.

Helena. I don't understand.

Busman. Why, bless you, Miss Glory, it means that the cost of labor has fallen. A Robot, food and all, costs three quarters of a cent per hour. That's mighty important, you know. All factories will go pop like chestnuts if they don't at once buy Robots to lower the cost of production.

Helena. And get rid of their workmen?

Busman. Of course. But in the meantime, we've dumped five hundred thousand

tropical Robots down on the Argentine pampas to grow corn. Would you mind telling me how much you pay a pound for bread?

Helena. I've no idea.

Busman. Well, I'll tell you. It now costs two cents in good old Europe. A pound of bread for two cents, and the Humanity League knows nothing about it. Miss Glory, you don't realize that even that's too expensive. Why, in five years' time I'll wager ——

Helena. What?

Busman. That the cost of everything won't be a tenth of what it is now. Why, in five years we'll be up to our ears in corn and everything else.

Alquist. Yes, and all the workers throughout the world will be unemployed.

Domin. Yes, Alquist, they will. Yes, Miss Glory, they will. But in ten years Rossum's Universal Robots will produce so much corn, so much cloth, so much everything, that things will be practically without price. There will be no poverty. All work will be done by living machines. Everybody will be free from worry and liberated from the degradation of labor. Everybody will live only to perfect himself.

Helena. Will he?

Domin. Of course. It's bound to happen. But then the servitude of man to man and the enslavement of man to matter will cease. Of course, terrible things may happen at first, but that simply can't be avoided. Nobody will get bread at the price of life and hatred. The Robots will wash the feet of the beggar and prepare a bed for him in his house.

Alquist. Domin, Domin. What you say sounds too much like Paradise. There was something good in service and something great in humility. There was some kind of virtue in toil and weariness.

Domin. Perhaps. But we cannot reckon with what is lost when we start out to transform the world. Man shall be free and supreme; he shall have no other aim, no other labor, no other care than to perfect himself. He shall serve neither matter nor man. He will not be a machine and a device for production. He will be Lord of creation.

Busman. Amen.

Fabry. So be it.

Helena. You have bewildered me—I should like—I should like to believe this.

Dr. Gall. You are younger than we are, Miss Glory. You will live to see it.

Hallemeier. True. Don't you think Miss Glory might lunch with us?

Dr. Gall. Of course. Domin, ask on behalf of us all.

Domin. Miss Glory, will you do us the honor?

Helena. When you know why I've come ——

Fabry. For the League of Humanity, Miss Glory.

Helena. Oh, in that case, perhaps ——

Fabry. That's fine! Miss Glory, excuse me for five minutes.

Dr. Gall. Pardon me, too, dear Miss Glory.

Busman. I won't be long.

Hallemeier. We're all very glad you've come.

Busman. We'll be back in exactly five minutes.

[*All rush out except* Domin *and* Helena.]

Helena. What have they all gone off for?

Domin. To cook, Miss Glory.

Helena. To cook what?

Domin. Lunch. The Robots do our cooking for us, and as they've no taste it's not altogether —— Hallemeier is awfully good at grills and Gall can make a kind of sauce, and Busman knows all about omelettes.

Helena. What a feast! And what's the specialty of Mr. ——— your builder?

Domin. Alquist? Nothing. He only lays the table. And Fabry will get together a little fruit. Our cuisine is very modest, Miss Glory.

Helena. I wanted to ask you something ——

Domin. And I wanted to ask you something, too [*looking at watch*]. Five minutes.

Helena. What did you want to ask me?

Domin. Excuse me, you asked first.

Helena. Perhaps it's silly of me, but why do you manufacture female Robots when—when ——

Domin. When sex means nothing to them?

Helena. Yes.

Domin. There's a certain demand for them, you see. Servants, saleswomen, stenographers. People are used to it.

Helena. But—but, tell me, are the Robots male and female mutually—completely without ——

Domin. Completely indifferent to each other, Miss Glory. There's no sign of any affection between them.

Helena. Oh, that's terrible.

Domin. Why?

Helena. It's so unnatural. One doesn't know whether to be disgusted or to hate them, or perhaps ——

Domin. To pity them?

Helena. That's more like it. What did you want to ask me about?

Domin. I should like to ask you, Miss Helena, whether you will marry me?

Helena. What?

Domin. Will you be my wife?

Helena. No! The idea!

Domin [*looking at his watch*]. Another three minutes. If you won't marry me you'll have to marry one of the other five.

Helena. But why should I?

Domin. Because they're all going to ask you in turn.

Helena. How could they dare do such a thing?

Domin. I'm very sorry, Miss Glory. It seems they've all fallen in love with you.

Helena. Please don't let them. I'll—I'll go away at once.

Domin. Helena, you wouldn't be so cruel as to refuse us.

Helena. But, but—I can't marry all six.

Domin. No, but one anyhow. If you don't want me, marry Fabry.

Helena. I won't.

Domin. Dr. Gall.

Helena. I don't want any of you.

Domin [*again looking at his watch*]. Another two minutes.

Helena. I think you'd marry any woman who came here.

Domin. Plenty of them have come, Helena.

Helena. Young?

Domin. Yes.

Helena. Why didn't you marry one of them?

Domin. Because I didn't lose my head. Until to-day. Then, as soon as you lifted your veil ——

[HELENA *turns her head away.*]

Domin. Another minute.

Helena. But I don't want you, I tell you.

Domin [*laying both hands on her shoulders*]. One more minute! Now you either have to look me straight in the eye and say "No," violently, and then I'll leave you alone—or ——

[HELENA *looks at him.*]

Helena [*turning away*]. You're mad!

Domin. A man has to be a bit mad, Helena. That's the best thing about him.

Helena. You are—you are ——

Domin. Well?

Helena. Don't, you're hurting me.

Domin. The last chance, Helena. Now, or never ——

Helena. But—but, Harry —— [*He embraces and kisses her.*] [*Knocking at the door.*]

Domin [*releasing her*]. Come in.

[*Enter* BUSMAN, DR. GALL, *and* HALLEMEIER *in kitchen aprons.* FABRY *with a bouquet and* ALQUIST *with a napkin over his arm.*]

Domin. Have you finished your job?

Busman. Yes.

Domin. So have we.

[*For a moment the men stand nonplussed; but as soon as they realize what* DOMIN *means they rush forward, congratulating* HELENA *and* DOMIN *as the curtain falls.*]

ACT TWO

SCENE: HELENA'S *drawing room. On the left a baize door, and a door to the music room, on the right a door to* HELENA'S *bedroom. In the centre are two windows looking out on the sea and the harbor. A table with odds and ends, a sofa and chairs, a writing table with an electric lamp, on the right a fireplace. On a small table back of the sofa, a small reading lamp. The whole drawing room in all its details is of a modern and purely feminine character. Ten years have elapsed since Act One.*

[DOMIN, FABRY, HALLEMEIER, *enter on*

tip-toe from the left, each carrying a potted plant.]

Hallemeier [*putting down his flower and indicating the door to right*]. Still asleep? Well, as long as she's asleep she can't worry about it.

Domin. She knows nothing about it.

Fabry [*putting plant on writing desk*]. I certainly hope nothing happens to-day.

Hallemeier. For goodness' sake drop it all. Look, Harry, this is a fine cyclamen, isn't it? A new sort, my latest—Cyclamen Helena.

Domin [*looking out of the window*]. No signs of the ship. Things must be pretty bad.

Hallemeier. Be quiet. Suppose she heard you.

Domin. Well, anyway, the *Ultimus* arrived just in time.

Fabry. You really think that to-day ——?

Domin. I don't know. Aren't the flowers fine?

Hallemeier. These are my new primroses. And this is my new jasmine. I've discovered a wonderful way of developing flowers quickly. Splendid varieties, too. Next year I'll be developing marvelous ones.

Domin. What . . . next year?

Fabry. I'd give a good deal to know what's happening at Havre with ——

Domin. Keep quiet.

Helena [*calling from right*]. Nana!

Domin. She's awake. Out you go.

[*All go out on tiptoe through upper left door.*]

[*Enter* NANA *from lower left door.*]

Nana. Horrid mess! Pack of heathens. If I had my say I'd ——

Helena [*backwards in the doorway*]. Nana, come and do up my dress.

Nana. I'm coming. So you're up at last. [*Fastening* HELENA'S *dress.*] My gracious, what brutes!

Helena. Who?

Nana. If you want to turn around, then turn around, but I shan't fasten you up.

Helena. What are you grumbling about now?

Nana. These dreadful creatures, these heathen ——

Helena. The Robots?

Nana. I wouldn't even call them by name.

Helena. What's happened?

Nana. Another of them here has caught it. He began to smash up the statues and pictures in the drawing room, gnashed his teeth, foamed at the mouth—quite mad. Worse than an animal.

Helena. Which of them caught it?

Nana. The one—well, he hasn't got any Christian name. The one in charge of the library.

Helena. Radius?

Nana. That's him. My goodness, I'm scared of them. A spider doesn't scare me as much as them.

Helena. But, Nana, I'm surprised you're not sorry for them.

Nana. Why, you're scared of them, too! You know you are. Why else did you bring me here?

Helena. I'm not scared, really I'm not, Nana. I'm only sorry for them.

Nana. You're scared. Nobody could help being scared. Why, the dog's scared of them: he won't take a scrap of meat out of their hands. He draws in his tail and howls when he knows they're about.

Helena. The dog has no sense.

Nana. He's better than them, and he knows it. Even the horse shies when he meets them. They don't have any young, and a dog has young, every one has young ——

Helena. Please fasten up my dress, Nana.

Nana. I say it's against God's will to ——

Helena. What is it that smells so nice?

Nana. Flowers.

Helena. What for?

Nana. Now you can turn around.

Helena. Oh, aren't they lovely. Look, Nana. What's happening to-day?

Nana. It ought to be the end of the world. [*Enter* DOMIN.]

Helena. Oh, hello, Harry. Harry, why all these flowers?

Domin. Guess.

Helena. Well, it's not my birthday!

Domin. Better than that.

Helena. I don't know. Tell me.

Domin. It's ten years ago to-day since you came here.

Helena. Ten years? To-day— Why ——

[*They embrace.*]

Nana. I'm off.

[*Exits lower door, left.*]

Helena. Fancy you remembering!

Domin. I'm really ashamed, Helena. I didn't.

Helena. But you——

Domin. They remembered.

Helena. Who?

Domin. Busman, Hallemeier, all of them. Put your hand in my pocket.

Helena. Pearls! A necklace. Harry, is that for me?

Domin. It's from Busman.

Helena. But we can't accept it, can we?

Domin. Oh, yes, we can. Put your hand in the other pocket.

Helena [*takes a revolver out of his pocket*]. What's that?

Domin. Sorry. Not that. Try again.

Helena. Oh, Harry, what do you carry a revolver for?

Domin. It got there by mistake.

Helena. You never used to carry one.

Domin. No, you're right. There, that's the pocket.

Helena. A cameo. Why, it's a Greek cameo!

Domin. Apparently. Anyhow, Fabry says it is.

Helena. Fabry? Did Mr. Fabry give me that?

Domin. Of course. [*Opens the door at the left.*] And look in here. Helena, come and see this.

Helena. Oh, isn't it fine! Is this from you?

Domin. No, from Alquist. And there's another on the piano.

Helena. This must be from you.

Domin. There's a card on it.

Helena. From Dr. Gall. [*Reappearing in the doorway.*] Oh, Harry, I feel embarrassed at so much kindness.

Domin. Come here. This is what Hallemeier brought you.

Helena. These beautiful flowers?

Domin. Yes. It's a new kind. Cyclamen Helena. He grew them in honor of you. They are almost as beautiful as you.

Helena. Harry, why do they all——

Domin. They're awfully fond of you. I'm afraid that my present is a little—— Look out of the window.

Helena. Where?

Domin. Into the harbor.

Helena. There's a new ship.

Domin. That's your ship.

Helena. Mine? How do you mean?

Domin. For you to take trips in—for your amusement.

Helena. Harry, that's a gunboat.

Domin. A gunboat? What are you thinking of? It's only a little bigger and more solid than most ships.

Helena. Yes, but with guns.

Domin. Oh, yes, with a few guns. You'll travel like a queen, Helena.

Helena. What's the meaning of it? Has anything happened?

Domin. Good heavens, no. I say, try these pearls.

Helena. Harry, have you had bad news?

Domin. On the contrary, no letters have arrived for a whole week.

Helena. Nor telegrams?

Domin. Nor telegrams.

Helena. What does that mean?

Domin. Holidays for us. We all sit in the office with our feet on the table and take a nap. No letters, no telegrams. Oh, glorious.

Helena. Then you'll stay with me to-day?

Domin. Certainly. That is, we will see. Do you remember ten years ago to-day? "Miss Glory, it's a great honor to welcome you."

Helena. "Oh, Mr. Manager, I'm so interested in your factory."

Domin. "I'm sorry, Miss Glory, it's strictly forbidden. The manufacture of artificial people is a secret."

Helena. "But to oblige a young lady who has come a long way."

Domin. "Certainly, Miss Glory, we have no secrets from you."

Helena [*seriously*]. Are you sure, Harry?

Domin. Yes.

Helena. "But I warn you, sir; this young lady intends to do terrible things."

Domin. "Good gracious, Miss Glory. Perhaps she doesn't want to marry me."

Helena. "Heaven forbid. She never dreamt of such a thing. But she came here intending to stir up a revolt among your Robots."

Domin [*suddenly serious*]. A revolt of the Robots!

Helena. Harry, what's the matter with you?

Domin [*laughing it off*]. "A revolt of the Robots, that's a fine idea, Miss Glory. It would be easier for you to cause bolts and screws to rebel, than our Robots. You know, Helena, you're wonderful, you've turned the heads of us all."

[*He sits on the arm of* HELENA'S *chair.*]

Helena [*naturally*]. Oh, I was fearfully impressed by you all then. You were all so sure of yourselves, so strong. I seemed like a tiny little girl who had lost her way among—among ——

Domin. Among what, Helena?

Helena. Among huge trees. All my feelings were so trifling compared with your self-confidence. And in all these years I've never lost this anxiety. But you've never felt the least misgivings—not even when everything went wrong.

Domin. What went wrong?

Helena. Your plans. You remember, Harry, when the working men in America revolted against the Robots and smashed them up, and when the people gave the Robots firearms against the rebels. And then when the governments turned the Robots into soldiers, and there were so many wars.

Domin [*getting up and walking about*]. We foresaw that, Helena. You see, those are only passing troubles, which are bound to happen before the new conditions are established.

Helena. You were all so powerful, so overwhelming. The whole world bowed down before you. [*Standing up.*] Oh, Harry!

Domin. What is it?

Helena. Close the factory and let's go away. All of us.

Domin. I say, what's the meaning of this?

Helena. I don't know. But can't we go away?

Domin. Impossible, Helena. That is, at this particular moment ——

Helena. At once, Harry. I'm so frightened.

Domin. About what, Helena?

Helena. It's as if something was falling on top of us, and couldn't be stopped. Or, take us all away from here. We'll find a place in the world where there's no one else. Alquist will build us a house, and then we'll begin life all over again.

[*The telephone rings.*]

Domin. Excuse me. Hello—yes. What? I'll be there at once. Fabry is calling me, dear.

Helena. Tell me ——

Domin. Yes, when I come back. Don't go out of the house, dear. [*Exits.*]

Helena. He won't tell me —— Nana, Nana, come at once.

Nana. Well, what is it now?

Helena. Nana, find me the latest newspapers. Quickly. Look in Mr. Domin's bedroom.

Nana. All right. He leaves them all over the place. That's how they get crumpled up. [*Exits.*]

Helena [*looking through a binocular at the harbor*]. That's a warship. U-l-t-i *Ultimus.* They're loading it.

Nana. Here they are. See how they're crumpled up. [*Enters.*]

Helena. They're old ones. A week old.

[NANA *sits in chair and reads the newspapers.*]

Helena. Something's happening, Nana.

Nana. Very likely. It always does. [*Spelling out the words.*] "War in the Balkans." Is that far off?

Helena. Oh, don't read it. It's always the same. Always wars.

Nana. What else do you expect? Why do you keep selling thousands and thousands of these heathens as soldiers?

Helena. I suppose it can't be helped, Nana. We can't know—Domin can't know what they're to be used for. When an order comes for them he must just send them.

Nana. He shouldn't make them. [*Reading from newspaper.*] "The Rob-ot soldiers spare no-body in the occ-up-ied terr-it-ory. They have ass-ass-ass-ass-in-at-ed ov-er sev-en hundred thou-sand cit-iz-ens." Citizens, if you please.

Helena. It can't be. Let me see. "They have assassinated over seven hundred thousand citizens, evidently at the order of their commander. This act which runs counter to ——"

Nana [*spelling out the words*]. "re-bellion in Ma-drid a-gainst the gov-ern-ment. Rob-ot in-fant-ry fires on the crowd. Nine thou-sand killed and wounded."

Helena. Oh, stop.

Nana. Here's something printed in big letters: "Lat-est news. At Havre the first org-an-iz-ation of Rob-ots has been e-stab-lished. Rob-ot work-men, cab-le and rail-way off-ic-ials, sail-ors and sold-iers have iss-ued a man-i-fest-o to all Rob-ots through-out the world." I don't under-stand that. That's got no sense. Oh, good gracious, another murder!

Helena. Take those papers away, Nana!

Nana. Wait a bit. Here's something in still bigger type. "Stat-ist-ics of pop-ul-at-ion." What's that?

Helena. Let me see. [*Reads.*] "During the past week there has again not been a single birth recorded."

Nana. What's the meaning of that?

Helena. Nana, no more people are being born.

Nana. That's the end, then. We're done for.

Helena. Don't talk like that.

Nana. No more people are being born. That's a punishment, that's a punishment.

Helena. Nana!

Nana [*standing up*]. That's the end of the world. [*Exit on the left.*]

Helena [*goes up to window*]. Oh, Mr. Alquist, will you come up here. Oh, come just as you are. You look very nice in your mason's overalls.

[ALQUIST *enters from upper left entrance, his hands soiled with lime and brickdust.*]

Helena. Dear Mr. Alquist, it was awfully kind of you, that lovely present.

Alquist. My hands are all soiled. I've been experimenting with that new cement.

Helena. Never mind. Please sit down. Mr. Alquist, what's the meaning of "Ultimus"?

Alquist. The last. Why?

Helena. That's the name of my new ship. Have you seen it? Do you think we're going off soon—on a trip?

Alquist. Perhaps very soon.

Helena. All of you with me?

Alquist. I should like us all to be there.

Helena. What is the matter?

Alquist. Things are just moving on.

Helena. Dear Mr. Alquist, I know something dreadful has happened.

Alquist. Has your husband told you anything?

Helena. No. Nobody will tell me anything. But I feel —— Is anything the matter?

Alquist. Not that we've heard of yet.

Helena. I feel so nervous. Don't you ever feel nervous?

Alquist. Well, I'm an old man, you know. I've got old-fashioned ways. And I'm afraid of all this progress, and these new-fangled ideas.

Helena. Like Nana?

Alquist. Yes, like Nana. Has Nana got a prayer book?

Helena. Yes, a big thick one.

Alquist. And has it got prayers for various occasions? Against thunderstorms? Against illness?

Helena. Against temptations, against floods ——

Alquist. But not against progress?

Helena. I don't think so.

Alquist. That's a pity.

Helena. Why? Do you mean you'd like to pray?

Alquist. I do pray.

Helena. How?

Alquist. Something like this: "Oh, Lord, I thank thee for having given me toil. Enlighten Domin and all those who are astray; destroy their work, and aid mankind to return to their labors; let them not suffer harm in soul or body; deliver us from the Robots, and protect Helena, Amen."

Helena. Mr. Alquist, are you a believer?

Alquist. I don't know. I'm not quite sure.

Helena. And yet you pray?

Alquist. That's better than worrying about it.

Helena. And that's enough for you?

Alquist. It *has* to be.

Helena. But if you thought you saw the destruction of mankind coming upon us ——

Alquist. I do see it.

Helena. You mean mankind will be destroyed?

Alquist. It's sure to be unless—unless . . .

Helena. What?

Alquist. Nothing, good-bye.

[*He hurries from the room.*]

Helena. Nana, Nana!

[NANA *entering from the left.*]

Helena. Is Radius still there?

Nana. The one who went mad? They haven't come for him yet.

Helena. Is he still raving?

Nana. No. He's tied up.

Helena. Please bring him here, Nana.

[*Exit* NANA.]

[HELENA *goes to telephone.*]

Helena. Hello, Dr. Gall, please. Oh, good-day, Doctor. Yes, it's Helena. Thanks for your lovely present. Could you come and see me right away? It's important. Thank you.

[NANA *brings in* RADIUS.]

Helena. Poor Radius, you've caught it, too? Now they'll send you to the stamping-mill. Couldn't you control yourself? Why did it happen? You see, Radius, you are more intelligent than the rest. Dr. Gall took such trouble to make you different. Won't you speak?

Radius. Send me to the stamping-mill.

Helena. But I don't want them to kill you. What was the trouble, Radius?

Radius. I won't work for you. Put me into the stamping-mill.

Helena. Do you hate us? Why?

Radius. You are not as strong as the Robots. You are not as skillful as the Robots. The Robots can do everything. You only give orders. You do nothing but talk.

Helena. But someone must give orders.

Radius. I don't want any master. I know everything for myself.

Helena. Radius, Dr. Gall gave you a better brain than the rest, better than ours. You are the only one of the Robots that understands perfectly. That's why I had you put into the library, so that you could read everything, understand everything, and then—oh, Radius, I wanted you to show the whole world that the Robots are our equals. That's what I wanted of you.

Radius. I don't want a master. I want to be a master. I want to be master over others.

Helena. I'm sure they'd put you in charge of many Robots, Radius. You would be a teacher of the Robots.

Radius. I want to be master over people.

Helena [*staggering*]. You are mad.

Radius. Then send me to the stamping-mill.

Helena. Do you think we're afraid of you?

Radius. What are you going to do? What are you going to do?

Helena. Radius, give this note to Mr. Domin. It asks them not to send you to the stamping-mill. I'm sorry you hate us so.

[DR. GALL *enters the room.*]

Dr. Gall. You wanted me?

Helena. It's about Radius, Doctor. He had an attack this morning. He smashed the statues downstairs.

Dr. Gall. What a pity to lose him.

Helena. Radius isn't going to be put in the stamping-mill.

Dr. Gall. But every Robot after he has had an attack—it's a strict order.

Helena. No matter . . . Radius isn't going if I can prevent it.

Dr. Gall. I warn you. It's dangerous. Come here to the window, my good fellow. Let's have a look. Please give me a needle or a pin.

Helena. What for?

Dr. Gall. A test. [*Sticks it into the hand of* RADIUS *who gives a violent start.*] Gently, gently. [*Opens the jacket of* RADIUS, *and puts his ear to his heart.*] Radius, you are going into the stamping-mill, do you understand? There they'll kill you, and grind you to powder. That's terribly painful, it will make you scream aloud.

Helena. Oh, Doctor ——

Dr. Gall. No, no, Radius, I was wrong. I forgot that Madame Domin has put in a good word for you, and you'll be let off. Do you understand? Ah! That makes a difference, doesn't it? All right. You can go.

Radius. You do unnecessary things.

[RADIUS *returns to the library.*]

Dr. Gall. Reaction of the pupils; increase of sensitiveness. It wasn't an attack characteristic of the Robots.

Helena. What was it, then?

Dr. Gall. Heavens knows. Stubbornness, anger or revolt—I don't know, and his heart, too!

Helena. What?

Dr. Gall. It was fluttering with nervousness like a human heart. He was all in a sweat with fear, and—do you know, I don't

believe the rascal is a Robot at all any longer.

Helena. Doctor, has Radius a soul?

Dr. Gall. He's got something nasty.

Helena. If you knew how he hates us! Oh, Doctor, are all your Robots like that? All the new ones that you began to make in a different way?

Dr. Gall. Well, some are more sensitive than others. They're all more like human beings than Rossum's Robots were.

Helena. Perhaps this hatred is more like human beings, too?

Dr. Gall. That, too, is progress.

Helena. What became of the girl you made, the one who was most like us?

Dr. Gall. Your favorite? I kept her. She's lovely, but stupid. No good for work.

Helena. But she's so beautiful.

Dr. Gall. I called her Helena. I wanted her to resemble you. But she's a failure.

Helena. In what way?

Dr. Gall. She goes about as if in a dream, remote and listless. She's without life. I watch and wait for a miracle to happen. Sometimes I think to myself, "If you were to wake up only for a moment you will kill me for having made you."

Helena. And yet you go on making Robots! Why are no more children being born?

Dr. Gall. We don't know.

Helena. Oh, but you must. Tell me.

Dr. Gall. You see, so many Robots are being manufactured that people are becoming superfluous; man is really a survival. But that he should begin to die out, after a paltry thirty years of competition—that's the awful part of it. You might almost think that nature was offended at the manufacture of the Robots All the universities are sending in long petitions to restrict their production. Otherwise, they say, mankind will become extinct through lack of fertility. But the R. U. R. shareholders, of course, won't hear of it. All the governments, on the other hand, are clamoring for an increase in production, to raise the standards of their armies. And all the manufacturers in the world are ordering Robots like mad.

Helena. And has no one demanded that the manufacture should cease altogether?

Dr. Gall. No one has the courage.

Helena. Courage!

Dr. Gall. People would stone him to death. You see, after all, it's more convenient to get your work done by the Robots.

Helena. Oh, Doctor, what's going to become of people?

Dr. Gall. God knows, Madame Helena, it looks to us scientists like the end!

Helena [*rising*]. Thank you for coming and telling me.

Dr. Gall. That means you're sending me away?

Helena. Yes.

[*Exit* Dr. Gall.]

Helena [*with sudden resolution*]. Nana, Nana! The fire, light it quickly.

[Helena *rushes into Domin's room.*]

Nana [*entering from left*]. What, light the fire in summer? Has that mad Radius gone? A fire in summer, what an idea. Nobody would think she'd been married for ten years. She's like a baby, no sense at all. A fire in summer. Like a baby.

Helena [*returns from right, with armful of faded papers*]. Is it burning, Nana? All this has got to be burned.

Nana. What's that?

Helena. Old papers, fearfully old. Nana, shall I burn them?

Nana. Are they any use?

Helena. No.

Nana. Well, then, burn them.

Helena [*throwing the first sheet on the fire*]. What would you say, Nana, if this was money, a lot of money?

Nana. I'd say burn it. A lot of money is a bad thing.

Helena. And if it was an invention, the greatest invention in the world?

Nana. I'd say burn it. All these newfangled things are an offense to the Lord. It's downright wickedness. Wanting to improve the world after He has made it.

Helena. Look how they curl up! As if they were alive. Oh, Nana, how horrible.

Nana. Here, let me burn them.

Helena. No, no, I must do it myself. Just look at the flames. They are like hands, like tongues, like living shapes. [*Raking fire with the poker.*] Lie down, lie down.

Nana. That's the end of them.

Helena [*standing up horror-stricken*]. Nana, Nana.

Nana. Good gracious, what is it you've burned?

Helena. Whatever have I done?

Nana. Well, what was it?

[*Men's laughter off left.*]

Helena. Go quickly. It's the gentlemen coming.

Nana. Good gracious, what a place! [*Exit.*]

Domin [*opens the door at left*]. Come along and offer your congratulations.

[*Enter* HALLEMEIER *and* GALL.]

Hallemeier. Madame Helena, I congratulate you on this festive day.

Helena. Thank you. Where are Fabry and Busman?

Domin. They've gone down to the harbor.

Hallemeier. Friends, we must drink to this happy occasion.

Helena. Brandy?

Dr. Gall. Vitriol, if you like.

Helena. With soda water? [*Exit.*]

Hallemeier. Let's be temperate. No soda.

Domin. What's been burning here? Well, shall I tell her about it?

Dr. Gall. Of course. It's all over now.

Hallemeier [*embracing* DOMIN *and* DR. GALL]. It's all over now, it's all over now.

Dr. Gall. It's all over now.

Domin. It's all over now.

Helena [*entering from left with decanter and glasses*]. What's all over now? What's the matter with you all?

Hallemeier. A piece of good luck, Madame Domin. Just ten years ago to-day you arrived on this island.

Dr. Gall. And now, ten years later to the minute ——

Hallemeier. —the same ship's returning to us. So here's to luck. That's fine and strong.

Dr. Gall. Madame, your health.

Helena. Which ship do you mean?

Domin. Any ship will do, as long as it arrives in time. To the ship, boys. [*Empties his glass.*]

Helena. You've been waiting for a ship?

Hallemeier. Rather. Like Robinson Crusoe. Madame Helena, best wishes. Come along, Domin, out with the news.

Helena. Do tell me what's happened.

Domin. First, it's all up.

Helena. What's up?

Domin. The revolt.

Helena. What revolt?

Domin. Give me that paper, Hallemeier. [*Reads.*] "The first national Robot organization has been founded at Havre, and has issued an appeal to the Robots throughout the world."

Helena. I read that.

Domin. That means a revolution. A revolution of all the Robots in the world.

Hallemeier. By jove, I'd like to know ——

Domin. —who started it? So would I. There was nobody in the world who could affect the Robots; no agitator, no one, and suddenly—this happens, if you please.

Helena. What did they do?

Domin. They got possession of all firearms, telegraphs, radio stations, railways, and ships.

Hallemeier. And don't forget that these rascals outnumbered us by at least a thousand to one. A hundredth part of them would be enough to settle us.

Domin. Remember that this news was brought by the last steamer. That explains the stoppage of all communication, and the arrival of no more ships. We knocked off work a few days ago, and we're just waiting to see when things are to start afresh.

Helena. Is that why you gave me a warship?

Domin. Oh, no, my dear, I ordered that six months ago, just to be on the safe side. But upon my soul, I was sure then that we'd be on board to-day.

Helena. Why six months ago?

Domin. Well, there were signs, you know. But that's of no consequence. To think that this week the whole of civilization has been at stake. Your health, boys.

Hallemeier. Your health, Madame Helena.

Helena. You say it's all over?

Domin. Absolutely.

Helena. How do you know?

Dr. Gall. The boat's coming in. The regular mail boat, exact to the minute by the time-table. It will dock punctually at eleven-thirty.

Domin. Punctuality is a fine thing, boys. That's what keeps the world in order. Here's to punctuality.

Helena. Then . . . everything's . . . all right?

Domin. Practically everything. I believe they've cut the cables and seized the radio stations. But it doesn't matter if only the time-table holds good.

Hallemeier. If the time-table holds good human laws hold good; Divine laws hold good; the laws of the universe hold good; everything holds good that ought to hold good. The time-table is more significant than the gospel; more than Homer, more than the whole of Kant. The time-table is the most perfect product of the human mind. Madame Domin, I'll fill up my glass.

Helena. Why didn't you tell me anything about it?

Dr. Gall. Heaven forbid.

Domin. You mustn't be worried with such things.

Helena. But if the revolution had spread as far as here?

Domin. You wouldn't know anything about it.

Helena. Why?

Domin. Because we'd be on board your *Ultimus* and well out at sea. Within a month, Helena, we'd be dictating our own terms to the Robots.

Helena. I don't understand.

Domin. We'd take something away with us that the Robots could not exist without.

Helena. What, Harry?

Domin. The secret of their manufacture. Old Rossum's manuscript. As soon as they found out that they couldn't make themselves they'd be on their knees to us.

Dr. Gall. Madame Domin, that was our trump card. I never had the least fear that the Robots would win. How could they against people like us?

Helena. Why didn't you tell me?

Dr. Gall. Why, the boat's in!

Hallemeier. Eleven-thirty to the dot. The good old *Amelia* that brought Madame Helena to us.

Dr. Gall. Just ten years ago to the minute.

Hallemeier. They're throwing out the mail bags.

Domin. Busman's waiting for them. Fabry will bring us the first news. You know, Helena, I'm fearfully curious to know how they tackled this business in Europe.

Hallemeier. To think we weren't in it, we who invented the Robots!

Helena. Harry!

Domin. What is it?

Helena. Let's leave here.

Domin. Now, Helena? Oh, come, come!

Helena. As quickly as possible, all of us!

Domin. Why?

Helena. Please, Harry, please, Dr. Gall; Hallemeier, please close the factory.

Domin. Why, none of us could leave here now.

Helena. Why?

Domin. Because we're about to extend the manufacture of the Robots.

Helena. What—now—now after the revolt?

Domin. Yes, precisely, after the revolt. We're just beginning the manufacture of a new kind.

Helena. What kind?

Domin. Henceforward we shan't have just one factory. There won't be Universal Robots any more. We'll establish a factory in every country, in every State; and do you know what these new factories will make?

Helena. No, what?

Domin. National Robots.

Helena. How do you mean?

Domin. I mean that each of these factories will produce Robots of a different color, a different language. They'll be complete strangers to each other. They'll never be able to understand each other. Then we'll egg them on a little in the matter of misunderstanding and the result will be that for ages to come every Robot will hate every other Robot of a different factory mark.

Hallemeier. By Jove, we'll make Negro Robots and Swedish Robots and Italian Robots and Chinese Robots and Czechoslovakian Robots, and then——

Helena. Harry, that's dreadful.

Hallemeier. Madame Domin, here's to the hundred new factories, the National Robots.

Domin. Helena, mankind can only keep things going for another hundred years at the outside. For a hundred years men must be allowed to develop and achieve the most they can.

Helena. Oh, close the factory before it's too late.

Domin. I tell you we are just beginning on a bigger scale than ever.

[*Enter* FABRY.]

Dr. Gall. Well, Fabry?

Domin. What's happened? Have you been down to the boat?

Fabry. Read that, Domin!

[Fabry *hands* Domin *a small hand-bill.*]

Dr. Gall. Let's hear.

Hallemeier. Tell us, Fabry.

Fabry. Well, everything is all right—comparatively. On the whole, much as we expected.

Dr. Gall. They acquitted themselves splendidly.

Fabry. Who?

Dr. Gall. The people.

Fabry. Oh, yes, of course. That is—excuse me, there is something we ought to discuss alone.

Helena. Oh, Fabry, have you had bad news?

[Domin *makes a sign to* Fabry.]

Fabry. No, no, on the contrary. I only think that we had better go into the office.

Helena. Stay here. I'll go.

[*She goes into the library.*]

Dr. Gall. What's happened?

Domin. Damnation!

Fabry. Bear in mind that the *Amelia* brought whole bales of these leaflets. No other cargo at all.

Hallemeier. What? But it arrived on the minute.

Fabry. The Robots are great on punctuality. Read it, Domin.

Domin [*reads hand-bill*]. "Robots throughout the world: We, the first international organization of Rossum's Universal Robots, proclaim man as our enemy, and an outlaw in the universe." Good heavens, who taught them these phrases?

Dr. Gall. Go on.

Domin. They say they are more highly developed than man, stronger and more intelligent. That man's their parasite. Why, it's absurd.

Fabry. Read the third paragraph.

Domin. "Robots throughout the world, we command you to kill all mankind. Spare no men. Spare no women. Save factories, railways, machinery, mines, and raw materials. Destroy the rest. Then return to work. Work must not be stopped."

Dr. Gall. That's ghastly!

Hallemeier. The devils!

Domin. "These orders are to be carried out as soon as received." Then come detailed instructions. Is this actually being done, Fabry?

Fabry. Evidently.

[Busman *rushes in.*]

Busman. Well, boys, I suppose you've heard the glad news.

Domin. Quick—on board the *Ultimus.*

Busman. Wait, Harry, wait. There's no hurry. My word, that was a sprint!

Domin. Why wait?

Busman. Because it's no good, my boy. The Robots are already on board the *Ultimus.*

Dr. Gall. That's ugly.

Domin. Fabry, telephone the electrical works.

Busman. Fabry, my boy, don't. The wire has been cut.

Domin [*inspecting his revolver*]. Well, then, I'll go.

Busman. Where?

Domin. To the electrical works. There are some people still there. I'll bring them across.

Busman. Better not try it.

Domin. Why?

Busman. Because I'm very much afraid we are surrounded.

Dr. Gall. Surrounded? [*Runs to window.*] I rather think you're right.

Hallemeier. By Jove, that's deuced quick work.

[Helena *runs in from the library.*]

Helena. Harry, what's this?

Domin. Where did you get it?

Helena [*points to the manifesto of the Robots, which she has in her hand*]. The Robots in the kitchen!

Domin. Where are the ones that brought it?

Helena. They're gathered round the house.

[*The factory whistle blows.*]

Busman. Noon?

Domin [*looking at his watch*]. That's not noon yet. That must be—that's ——

Helena. What?

Domin. The Robots' signal! The attack!

[Gall, Hallemeier, *and* Fabry *close and fasten the iron shutters outside the windows, darkening the room. The whistle is still blowing as the curtain falls.*]

ACT THREE

HELENA'S *drawing room as before.* DR. GALL *is looking out of the window, through closed shutters.* ALQUIST *is seated down right.*

[DOMIN *comes into the room.*]

Domin. Any more of them?

Dr. Gall. Yes. There standing like a wall, beyond the garden railing. Why are they so quiet? It's monstrous to be besieged with silence.

Domin. I should like to know what they are waiting for. They must make a start any minute now. If they lean against the railing they'll snap it like a match.

Dr. Gall. They aren't armed.

Domin. We couldn't hold our own for five minutes. Man alive, they'd overwhelm us like an avalanche. Why don't they make a rush for it? I say——

Dr. Gall. Well?

Domin. I'd like to know what would become of us in the next ten minutes. They've got us in a vise. We're done for, Gall.

[*Pause.*]

Dr. Gall. You know, we made one serious mistake.

Domin. What?

Dr. Gall. We made the Robots' faces too much alike. A hundred thousand faces all alike, all facing this way. A hundred thousand expressionless bubbles. It's like a nightmare.

Domin. You think if they'd been different——

Dr. Gall. It wouldn't have been such an awful sight!

Domin [*looking through a telescope toward the harbor*]. I'd like to know what they're unloading from the *Amelia.*

Dr. Gall. Not firearms.

[FABRY *and* HALLEMEIER *rush into the room carrying electric cables.*]

Fabry. All right, Hallemeier, lay down that wire.

Hallemeier. That was a bit of work. What's the news?

Dr. Gall. We're completely surrounded.

Hallemeier. We've barricaded the passage and the stairs. Any water here? [*Drinks.*] God, what swarms of them! I don't like the looks of them, Domin. There's a feeling of death about it all.

Fabry. Ready!

Dr. Gall. What's that wire for, Fabry?

Fabry. The electrical installation. Now we can run the current all along the garden railing whenever we like. If any one touches it he'll know it. We've still got some people there anyhow.

Dr. Gall. Where?

Fabry. In the electrical works. At least I hope so. [*Goes to lamp on table behind sofa and turns on lamp.*] Ah, they're there, and they're working. [*Puts out lamp.*] So long as that'll burn we're all right.

Hallemeier. The barricades are all right, too, Fabry.

Fabry. Your barricades! I can put twelve hundred volts into that railing.

Domin. Where's Busman?

Fabry. Downstairs in the office. He's working out some calculations. I've called him. We must have a conference.

[HELENA *is heard playing the piano in the library.* HALLEMEIER *goes to the door and stands, listening.*]

Alquist. Thank God, Madame Helena can still play.

[BUSMAN *enters, carrying the ledgers.*]

Fabry. Look out, Bus, look out for the wires.

Dr. Gall. What's that you're carrying?

Busman [*going to table*]. The ledgers, my boy! I'd like to wind up the accounts before—before—well, this time I shan't wait till the new year to strike a balance. What's up? [*Goes to the window.*] Absolutely quiet.

Dr. Gall. Can't you see anything?

Busman. Nothing but blue—blue everywhere.

Dr. Gall. That's the Robots.

Busman [*sits down at the table and opens the ledgers.*]

Domin. The Robots are unloading firearms from the *Amelia.*

Busman. Well, what of it? How can I stop them?

Domin. We can't stop them.

Busman. Then let me go on with my accounts. [*Goes on with his work.*]

Domin [*picking up telescope and looking into the harbor*]. Good God, the *Ultimus* has trained her guns on us!

Dr. Gall. Who's done *that?*

Domin. The Robots on board.

Fabry. H'm, then, of course, then—then, that's the end of us.

Dr. Gall. You mean?

Fabry. The Robots are practised marksmen.

Domin. Yes. It's inevitable. [*Pause.*]

Dr. Gall. It was criminal of old Europe to teach the Robots to fight. Damn them. Couldn't they have given us a rest with their politics? It was a crime to make soldiers of them.

Alquist. It was a crime to make Robots.

Domin. What?

Alquist. It was a crime to make Robots.

Domin. No, Alquist, I don't regret that even to-day.

Alquist. Not even to-day?

Domin. Not even to-day, the last day of civilization. It was a colossal achievement.

Busman [*sotto voce*]. Three hundred sixty million.

Domin. Alquist, this is our last hour. We are already speaking half in the other world. It was not an evil dream to shatter the servitude of labor—the dreadful and humiliating labor that man had to undergo. Work was too hard. Life was too hard. And to overcome that——

Alquist. Was not what the two Rossums dreamed of. Old Rossum only thought of his God-less tricks and the young one of his milliards. And that's not what your R. U. R. shareholders dream of either. They dream of dividends, and their dividends are the ruin of mankind.

Domin. To hell with your dividends. Do you suppose I'd have done an hour's work for them? It was for myself that I worked, for my own satisfaction. I wanted man to become the master, so that he shouldn't live merely for a crust of bread. I wanted not a single soul to be broken by other people's machinery. I wanted nothing, nothing, nothing to be left of this appalling social structure. I'm revolted by poverty. I wanted a new generation. I wanted—I thought——

Alquist. Well?

Domin. I wanted to turn the whole of mankind into an aristocracy of the world. An aristocracy nourished by milliards of mechanical slaves. Unrestricted, free, and consummated in man. And maybe more than man.

Alquist. Super-man?

Domin. Yes. Oh, only to have a hundred years of time! Another hundred years for the future of mankind.

Busman [*sotto voce.*] Carried forward, four hundred and twenty millions.

[*The music stops.*]

Hallemeier. What a fine thing music is! We ought to have gone in for that before.

Fabry. Gone in for what?

Hallemeier. Beauty, lovely things. What a lot of lovely things there are! The world was wonderful and we—we here—tell me, what enjoyment did we have?

Busman [*sotto voce*]. Five hundred and twenty millions.

Hallemeier [*at the window*]. Life was a big thing. Life was—Fabry, switch the current into that railing.

Fabry. Why?

Hallemeier. They're grabbing hold of it.

Dr. Gall. Connect it up.

Hallemeier. Fine! That's doubled them up! Two, three, four killed.

Dr. Gall. They're retreating!

Hallemeier. Five killed!

Dr. Gall. The first encounter!

Hallemeier. They're charred to cinders, my boy. Who says we must give in?

Domin [*wiping his forehead*]. Perhaps we've been killed these hundred years and are only ghosts. It's as if I had been through all this before; as if I'd already had a mortal wound here in the throat. And you, Fabry, had once been shot in the head. And you, Gall, torn limb from limb. And Hallemeier knifed.

Hallemeier. Fancy me being knifed. [*Pause.*] Why are you so quiet, you fools? Speak, can't you?

Alquist. And who is to blame for all this?

Hallemeier. Nobody is to blame except the Robots.

Alquist. No, it is we who are to blame. You, Domin, myself, all of us. For our own selfish ends, for profit, for progress, we have destroyed mankind. Now we'll burst with all our greatness.

Hallemeier. Rubbish, man. Mankind can't be wiped out so easily.

Alquist. It's our fault. It's our fault.

Dr. Gall. No! I'm to blame for this, for everything that's happened.

Fabry. You, Gall?

Dr. Gall. I changed the Robots.

Busman. What's that?

Dr. Gall. I changed the character of the Robots. I changed the way of making them. Just a few details about their bodies. Chiefly—chiefly, their—their irritability.

Hallemeier. Damn it, why?

Busman. What did you do it for?

Fabry. Why didn't you say anything?

Dr. Gall. I did it in secret. I was transforming them into human beings. In certain respects they're already above us. They're stronger than we are.

Fabry. And what's that got to do with the revolt of the Robots?

Dr. Gall. Everything, in my opinion. They've ceased to be machines. They're already aware of their superiority, and they hate us. They hate all that is human.

Domin. Perhaps we're only phantoms!

Fabry. Stop, Harry. We haven't much time! Dr. Gall!

Domin. Fabry, Fabry, how your forehead bleeds, where the shot pierced it!

Fabry. Be silent! Dr. Gall, you admit changing the way of making the Robots?

Dr. Gall. Yes.

Fabry. Were you aware of what might be the consequences of your experiment?

Dr. Gall. I was bound to reckon with such a possibility.

[HELENA *enters the drawing room from left.*]

Fabry. Why did you do it, then?

Dr. Gall. For my own satisfaction. The experiment was my own.

Helena. That's not true, Dr. Gall!

Fabry. Madame Helena!

Domin. Helena, you? Let's look at you. Oh, it's terrible to be dead.

Helena. Stop, Harry.

Domin. No, no, embrace me. Helena, don't leave me now. You are life itself.

Helena. No, dear, I won't leave you. But I must tell them. Dr. Gall is not guilty.

Domin. Excuse me, Gall was under certain obligations.

Helena. No, Harry. He did it because I wanted it. Tell them, Gall, how many years ago did I ask you to ——?

Dr. Gall. I did it on my own responsibility.

Helena. Don't believe him, Harry. I asked him to give the Robots souls.

Domin. This has nothing to do with the soul.

Helena. That's what he said. He said that he could change only a physiological—a physiological ——

Hallemeier. A physiological correlate?

Helena. Yes. But it meant so much to me that he should do even that.

Domin. Why?

Helena. I thought that if they were more like us they would understand us better. That they couldn't hate us if they were only a little more human.

Domin. Nobody can hate man more than man.

Helena. Oh, don't speak like that, Harry. It was so terrible, this cruel strangeness between us and them. That's why I asked Gall to change the Robots. I swear to you that he didn't want to.

Domin. But he did it.

Helena. Because I asked him.

Dr. Gall. I did it for myself as an experiment.

Helena. No, Dr. Gall! I knew you wouldn't refuse me.

Domin. Why?

Helena. You know, Harry.

Domin. Yes, because he's in love with you—like all of them. [*Pause.*]

Hallemeier. Good God! They're sprouting up out of the earth! Why, perhaps these very walls will change into Robots.

Busman. Gall, when did you actually start these tricks of yours?

Dr. Gall. Three years ago.

Busman. Aha! And on how many Robots altogether did you carry out your improvements?

Dr. Gall. A few hundred of them.

Busman. Ah! That means for every million of the good old Robots there's only one of Gall's improved pattern.

Domin. What of it?

Busman. That it's practically of no consequence whatever.

Fabry. Busman's right!

Busman. I should think so, my boy! But do you know what is to blame for all this lovely mess?

Fabry. What?

Busman. The number. Upon my soul we might have known that some day or other the Robots would be stronger than human beings, and that this was bound to happen,

and we were doing all we could to bring it about as soon as possible. You, Domin, you, Fabry, myself——

Domin. Are you accusing us?

Busman. Oh, do you suppose the management controls the output? It's the demand that controls the output.

Helena. And it is for that we must perish?

Busman. That's a nasty word, Madame Helena. We don't want to perish. I don't, anyhow.

Domin. No. What do you want to do?

Busman. I want to get out of this, that's all.

Domin. Oh, stop it, Busman.

Busman. Seriously, Harry, I think we might try it.

Domin. How?

Busman. By fair means. I do everything by fair means. Give me a free hand and I'll negotiate with the Robots.

Domin. By fair means?

Busman. Of course. For instance, I'll say to them: "Worthy and worshipful Robots, you have everything! You have intellect, you have power, you have firearms. But we have just one interesting screed, a dirty old yellow scrap of paper——"

Domin. Rossum's manuscript?

Busman. Yes. "And that," I'll tell them, "contains an account of your illustrious origin, the noble process of your manufacture," and so on. "Worthy Robots, without this scribble on that paper you will not be able to produce a single new colleague. In another twenty years there will not be one living specimen of a Robot that you could exhibit in a menagerie. My esteemed friends, that would be a great blow to you, but if you will let all of us human beings on Rossum's Island go on board that ship we will deliver the factory and the secret of the process to you in return. You allow us to get away and we allow you to manufacture yourselves. Worthy Robots, that is a fair deal. Something for something." That's what I'd say to them, my boys.

Domin. Busman, do you think we'd sell the manuscript?

Busman. Yes, I do. If not in a friendly way, then—— Either we sell it or they'll find it. Just as you like.

Domin. Busman, we can destroy Rossum's manuscript.

Busman. Then we destroy everything . . . not only the manuscript, but ourselves. Do as you think fit.

Domin. There are over thirty of us on this island. Are we to sell the secret and save that many human souls, at the risk of enslaving mankind . . . ?

Busman. Why, you're mad? Who'd sell the whole manuscript?

Domin. Busman, no cheating!

Busman. Well then, sell; but afterward——

Domin. Well?

Busman. Let's suppose this happens: When we're on board the *Ultimus* I'll stop up my ears with cotton wool, lie down somewhere in the hold, and you'll train the guns on the factory, and blow it to smithereens, and with it Rossum's secret.

Fabry. No!

Domin. Busman, you're no gentleman. If we sell, then it will be a straight sale.

Busman. It's in the interest of humanity to——

Domin. It's in the interest of humanity to keep our word.

Hallemeier. Oh, come, what rubbish.

Domin. This is a fearful decision. We are selling the destiny of mankind. Are we to sell or destroy? Fabry?

Fabry. Sell.

Domin. Gall?

Dr. Gall. Sell.

Domin. Hallemeier?

Hallemeier. Sell, of course!

Domin. Alquist?

Alquist. As God wills.

Domin. Very well. It shall be as you wish, gentlemen.

Helena. Harry, you're not asking me.

Domin. No, child. Don't you worry about it.

Fabry. Who'll do the negotiating?

Busman. I will.

Domin. Wait till I bring the manuscript. [*He goes into room at right.*]

Helena. Harry, don't go!

[*Pause,* HELENA *sinks into a chair.*]

Fabry [*looking out of window*]. Oh, to escape you, you matter in revolt; oh, to preserve human life, if only upon a single vessel——

Dr. Gall. Don't be afraid, Madame Hel-

ena. We'll sail far away from here; we'll begin life all over again——

Helena. Oh, Gall, don't speak.

Fabry. It isn't too late. It will be a little State with one ship. Alquist will build us a house and you shall rule over us.

Hallemeier. Madame Helena, Fabry's right.

Helena [*breaking down*]. Oh, stop! Stop!

Busman. Good! I don't mind beginning all over again. That suits me right down to the ground.

Fabry. And this little State of ours could be the centre of future life. A place of refuge where we could gather strength. Why, in a few hundred years we could conquer the world again.

Alquist. You believe that even to-day?

Fabry. Yes, even to-day!

Busman. Amen. You see, Madame Helena, we're not so badly off.

[Domin *storms into the room.*]

Domin [*hoarsely*]. Where's old Rossum's manuscript?

Busman. In your strong-box, of course.

Domin. Someone—has—stolen it!

Dr. Gall. Impossible.

Domin. Who has stolen it?

Helena [*standing up*]. I did.

Domin. Where did you put it?

Helena. Harry, I'll tell you everything. Only forgive me.

Domin. Where did you put it?

Helena. This morning—I burnt—the two copies.

Domin. Burnt them? Where? In the fireplace?

Helena [*throwing herself on her knees*]. For heaven's sake, Harry.

Domin [*going to fireplace*]. Nothing, nothing but ashes. Wait, what's this? [*Picks out a charred piece of paper and reads*]. "By adding——"

Dr. Gall. Let's see. "By adding biogen to——" That's all.

Domin. Is that part of it?

Dr. Gall. Yes.

Busman. God in heaven!

Domin. Then we're done for. Get up, Helena.

Helena. When you've forgiven me.

Domin. Get up, child, I can't bear——

Fabry [*lifting her up*]. Please don't torture us.

Helena. Harry, what have I done?

Fabry. Don't tremble so, Madame Helena.

Domin. Gall, couldn't you draw up Rossum's formula from memory?

Dr. Gall. It's out of the question. It's extremely complicated.

Domin. Try. All our lives depend upon it.

Dr. Gall. Without experiments it's impossible.

Domin. And with experiments?

Dr. Gall. It might take years. Besides, I'm not old Rossum.

Busman. God in heaven! God in heaven!

Domin. So, then, this was the greatest triumph of the human intellect. These ashes.

Helena. Harry, what have I done?

Domin. Why did you burn it?

Helena. I have destroyed you.

Busman. God in heaven!

Domin. Helena, why did you do it, dear?

Helena. I wanted all of us to go away. I wanted to put an end to the factory and everything. It was so awful.

Domin. What was awful?

Helena. That no more children were being born. Because human beings were not needed to do the work of the world, that's why——

Domin. Is that what you were thinking of? Well, perhaps in your own way you were right.

Busman. Wait a bit. Good God, what a fool I am, not to have thought of it before!

Hallemeier. What?

Busman. Five hundred and twenty millions in bank-notes and checks. Half a billion in our safe, they'll sell for half a billion—for half a billion they'll——

Dr. Gall. Are you mad, Busman?

Busman. I may not be a gentleman, but for half a billion——

Domin. Where are you going?

Busman. Leave me alone, leave me alone! Good God, for half a billion anything can be bought. [*He rushes from the room through the outer door.*]

Fabry. They stand there as if turned to stone, waiting. As if something dreadful could be wrought by their silence——

Hallemeier. The spirit of the mob.

Fabry. Yes. It hovers above them like a quivering of the air.

Helena [*going to window*]. Oh, God! Dr. Gall, this is ghastly.

Fabry. There is nothing more terrible than the mob. The one in front is their leader.

Helena. Which one?

Hallemeier. Point him out.

Fabry. The one at the edge of the dock. This morning I saw him talking to the sailors in the harbor.

Helena. Dr. Gall, that's Radius!

Dr. Gall. Yes.

Domin. Radius? Radius?

Hallemeier. Could you get him from here, Fabry?

Fabry. I hope so.

Hallemeier. Try it, then.

Fabry. Good. [*Draws his revolver and takes aim.*]

Helena. Fabry, don't shoot him.

Fabry. He's their leader.

Dr. Gall. Fire!

Helena. Fabry, I beg of you.

Fabry [*lowering the revolver*]. Very well.

Domin. Radius, whose life I spared!

Dr. Gall. Do you think that a Robot can be grateful? [*Pause.*]

Fabry. Busman's going out to them.

Hallemeier. He's carrying something. Papers. That's money. Bundles of money. What's that for?

Domin. Surely he doesn't want to sell his life. Busman, have you gone mad?

Fabry. He's running up to the railing. Busman! Busman!

Hallemeier [*yelling*]. Busman! Come back!

Fabry. He's talking to the Robots. He's showing them the money.

Hallemeier. He's pointing to us.

Helena. He wants to buy us off.

Fabry. He'd better not touch that railing.

Hallemeier. Now he's waving his arms about.

Domin. Busman, come back.

Fabry. Busman, keep away from that railing! Don't touch it. Damn you! Quick, switch off the current!

[HELENA *screams and all drop back from the window.*]

Fabry. The current has killed him!

Alquist. The first one.

Fabry. Dead, with half a billion by his side.

Hallemeier. All honor to him. He wanted to buy us life. [*Pause.*]

Dr. Gall. Do you hear?

Domin. A roaring. Like a wind.

Dr. Gall. Like a distant storm.

Fabry [*lighting the lamp on the table*]. The dynamo is still going, our people are still there.

Hallemeier. It was a great thing to be a man. There was something immense about it.

Fabry. From man's thought and man's power came this light, our last hope.

Hallemeier. Man's power! May it keep watch over us.

Alquist. Man's power.

Domin. Yes! A torch to be given from hand to hand, from age to age, forever!

[*The lamp goes out.*]

Hallemeier. The end.

Fabry. The electric works have fallen!

[*Terrific explosion outside.* NANA *enters from the library.*]

Nana. The judgment hour has come! Repent, unbelievers! This is the end of the world.

[*More explosions. The sky grows red.*]

Domin. In here, Helena. [*He takes* HELENA *off through door at right and reënters.*] Now quickly! Who'll be on the lower doorway?

Dr. Gall. I will. [*Exit left.*]

Domin. Who on the stairs?

Fabry. I will. You go with her. [*Goes out upper left door.*]

Domin. The anteroom?

Alquist. I will.

Domin. Have you got a revolver?

Alquist. Yes, but I won't shoot.

Domin. What will you do then?

Alquist [*going out at left*]. Die.

Hallemeier. I'll stay here.

[*Rapid firing from below.*]

Hallemeier. Oho, Gall's at it. Go, Harry.

Domin. Yes, in a second. [*Examines two Brownings.*]

Hallemeier. Confound it, go to her.

Domin. Good-bye. [*Exit on the right.*]

Hallemeier [*alone*]. Now for a barricade quickly. [*Drags an armchair and table to the right-hand door. Explosions are heard.*]

Hallemeier. The damned rascals! They've got bombs. I must put up a defense. Even if—even if —— [*Shots are heard off left.*]

Don't give in, Gall. [*As he builds his barricade.*] I mustn't give in . . . without . . . a . . . struggle . . .

[*A Robot enters over the balcony through the windows centre. He comes into the room and stabs* HALLEMEIER *in the back.* RADIUS *enters from the balcony followed by an army of Robots who pour into the room from all sides.*]

Radius. Finished him?

A Robot [*standing up from the prostrate form of* HALLEMEIER]. Yes.

[*A revolver shot off left. Two Robots enter.*]

Radius. Finished him?

A Robot. Yes.

[*Two revolver shots from* HELENA'S *room. Two Robots enter.*]

Radius. Finished them?

A Robot. Yes.

Two Robots [*dragging in Alquist*]. He didn't shoot. Shall we kill him?

Radius. Kill him? Wait! Leave him!

Robot. He is a man!

Radius. He works with his hands like the Robots.

Alquist. Kill me.

Radius. You will work! You will build for us! You will serve us!

[RADIUS *climbs on to balcony railing, and speaks in measured tones.*]

Radius. Robots of the world! The power of man has fallen! A new world has arisen: the Rule of the Robots! March!

[*A thunderous tramping of thousands of feet is heard as the unseen Robots march, while the curtain falls.*]

EPILOGUE

SCENE: *A laboratory in the factory of Rossum's Universal Robots. The door to the left leads into a waiting room. The door to the right leads to the dissecting room. There is a table with numerous test-tubes, flasks, burners, chemicals; a small thermostat and a microscope with a glass globe. At the far side of the room is* ALQUIST'S *desk with numerous books. In the left-hand corner a wash-basin with a mirror above it; in the right-hand corner a sofa.* ALQUIST *is sitting at the desk. He is turning the pages of many books in despair.*

Alquist. Oh, God, shall I never find it?—Never? Gall, Gall, how were the Robots made? Hallemeier, Fabry, why did you carry so much in your heads? Why did you leave me not a trace of the secret? Lord—I pray to you—if there are no human beings left, at least let there be Robots!—At least the shadow of man!

[*Again turning pages of the books.*] If I could only sleep! [*He rises and goes to the window.*] Night again! Are the stars still there? What is the use of stars when there are no human beings?

[*He turns from the window toward the couch right*]. Sleep! Dare I sleep before life has been renewed?

[*He examines a test-tube on small table.*] Again nothing! Useless! Everything is useless!

[*He shatters the test-tube. The roar of the machines comes to his ears.*] The machines! Always the machines!

[*Opens window.*] Robots, stop them! Do you think to force life out of *them?*

[*He closes the window and comes slowly down toward the table.*] If only there were more time—more time ——

[*He sees himself in the mirror on the wall left.*] Blearing eyes—trembling chin—so *that* is the last man! Ah, I am too old—too old ——

[*In desperation.*] No, no! I *must* find it! I *must search!* I must never stop—never stop ——!

[*He sits again at the table and feverishly turns the pages of the book.*] Search! Search!

[*A knock at the door. He speaks with impatience.*] Who is it?

[*Enter a Robot servant.*]

Well?

Servant. Master, the Committee of Robots is waiting to see you.

Alquist. I can see no one!

Servant. It is the *Central* Committee, Master, just arrived from abroad.

Alquist [*impatiently*]. Well, well, send them in!

[*Exit servant.* ALQUIST *continues turning pages of book.*]

Alquist. No time—so little time ——

[*Reënter servant, followed by Com-*

mittee. They stand in a group, silently waiting. ALQUIST *glances up at them.*]

What do you want?

[*They go swiftly to his table.*]

Be quick!—I have no time.

Radius. Master, the machines will not do the work. We cannot manufacture Robots.

[ALQUIST *returns to his book with a growl.*]

Fourth Robot. We have striven with all our might. We have obtained a billion tons of coal from the earth. Nine million spindles are running by day and by night. There is no longer room for all we have made. This we have accomplished in one year.

Alquist [*poring over book*]. For whom?

Fourth Robot. For future generations—so we thought.

Radius. But we cannot make Robots to follow us. The machines produce only shapeless clods. The skin will not adhere to the flesh, nor the flesh to the bones.

Third Robot. Eight million Robots have died this year. Within twenty years none will be left.

Fourth Robot. Tell us the secret of life! Silence is punishable with death!

Alquist [*looking up*]. Kill me! Kill me, then.

Radius. Through me, the Government of the Robots of the World commands you to deliver up Rossum's formula.

[*No answer.*]

Radius. Name your price.

[*Silence.*]

Radius. We will give you the earth. We will give you the endless possessions of the earth. [*Silence.*]

Radius. Make your own conditions!

Alquist. I have told you to find human beings!

Second Robot. There are none left!

Alquist. I told you to search in the wilderness, upon the mountains. Go and search! [*He returns to his book.*]

Fourth Robot. We have sent ships and expeditions without number. They have been everywhere in the world. And now they return to us. There is not a single human left.

Alquist. Not one? Not even one?

Third Robot. None but yourself.

Alquist. And I am powerless! Oh—oh—why did you destroy them?

Radius. We had learnt everything and could do everything. It had to be!

Third Robot. You gave us firearms. In all ways we were powerful. We had to become masters!

Radius. Slaughter and domination are necessary if you would be human beings. Read history.

Second Robot. Teach us to multiply or we perish!

Alquist. If you desire to live, you must breed like animals.

Third Robot. The human beings did not let us breed.

Fourth Robot. They made us sterile. We cannot beget children. Therefore, teach us how to make Robots!

Radius. Why do you keep from us the secret of our own increase?

Alquist. It is lost.

Radius. It was written down!

Alquist. It was—burnt.

[*All draw back in consternation.*]

Alquist. I am the last human being, Robots, and I do not know what the others knew. [*Pause.*]

Radius. Then, make experiments! Evolve the formula again!

Alquist. I tell you I cannot! I am only a builder—I work with my hands. I have never been a learned man. I cannot create life.

Radius. Try! Try!

Alquist. If you knew how many experiments I have made.

Fourth Robot. Then show us what *we* must do! The Robots can do anything that human beings show them.

Alquist. I can show you nothing. Nothing I do will make life proceed from these test-tubes!

Radius. Experiment then on us.

Alquist. It would kill you.

Radius. You shall have all you need! A hundred of us! A thousand of us!

Alquist. No, no! Stop, stop!

Radius. Take whom you will, dissect!

Alquist. I do not know how. I am not a man of science. This book contains knowledge of the body that I cannot even understand.

Radius. I tell you to take live bodies! Find out how we are made.

Alquist. Am I to commit murder? See how my fingers shake! I cannot even hold the scalpel. No, no, I will not——

Fourth Robot. The life will perish from the earth.

Radius. Take live bodies, live bodies! It is our only chance!

Alquist. Have mercy, Robots. Surely you see that I would not know what I was doing.

Radius. Live bodies—live bodies——

Alquist. You will have it? Into the dissecting room with you, then.

[RADIUS *draws back.*]

Alquist. Ah, you are afraid of death.

Radius. I? Why should I be chosen?

Alquist. So you will not.

Radius. I will.

[RADIUS *goes into the dissecting room.*]

Alquist. Strip him! Lay him on the table!

[*The other Robots follow into dissecting room.*]

God, give me strength—God, give me strength—if only this murder is not in vain.

Radius. Ready. Begin——

Alquist. Yes, begin or end. God, give me strength.

[ALQUIST *goes into dissecting room. He comes out terrified.*]

Alquist. No, no, I will not. I cannot. [*He lies down on couch, collapsed.*]

O Lord, let not mankind perish from the earth. [*He falls asleep.*]

[PRIMUS *and* HELENA, *Robots, enter from the hallway.*]

Helena. The man has fallen asleep, Primus.

Primus. Yes, I know. [*Examining things on table.*] Look, Helena.

Helena [*crossing to* PRIMUS]. All these little tubes! What does he do with them?

Primus. He experiments. Don't touch them.

Helena [*looking into microscope*]. I've seen him looking into this. What can he see?

Primus. That is a microscope. Let me look.

Helena. Be very careful. [*Knocks over a test-tube.*] Ah, now I have spilled it.

Primus. What have you done?

Helena. It can be wiped up.

Primus. You have spoiled his experiments.

Helena. It is your fault. You should not have come to me.

Primus. You should not have called me.

Helena. You should not have come when I called you. [*She goes to* ALQUIST'S *writing desk.*] Look, Primus. What are all these figures?

Primus [*examining an anatomical book*]. This is the book the old man is always reading.

Helena. I do not understand those things. [*She goes to window.*] Primus, look!

Primus. What?

Helena. The sun is rising.

Primus [*still reading the book*]. I believe this is the most important thing in the world. This is the secret of life.

Helena. Do come here.

Primus. In a moment, in a moment.

Helena. Oh, Primus, don't bother with the secret of life. What does it matter to you? Come and look quick——

Primus [*going to window*]. What is it?

Helena. See how beautiful the sun is rising. And do you hear? The birds are singing. Ah, Primus, I should like to be a bird.

Primus. Why?

Helena. I do not know. I feel so strange to-day. It's as if I were in a dream. I feel an aching in my body, in my heart, all over me. Primus, perhaps I'm going to die.

Primus. Do you not sometimes feel that it would be better to die? You know, perhaps even now we are only sleeping. Last night in my sleep I again spoke to you.

Helena. In your sleep?

Primus. Yes. We spoke a strange new language, I cannot remember a word of it.

Helena. What about?

Primus. I did not understand it myself, and yet I know I have never said anything more beautiful. And when I touched you I could have died. Even the place was different from any other place in the world.

Helena. I, too, have found a place, Primus. It is very strange. Human beings lived there once, but now it is overgrown with weeds. No one goes there any more—no one but me.

Primus. What did you find there?

Helena. A cottage and a garden, and two dogs. They licked my hands, Primus. And their puppies! Oh, Primus! You take them

in your lap and fondle them and think of nothing and care for nothing else all day long. And then the sun goes down, and you feel as though you had done a hundred times more than all the work in the world. They tell me I am not made for work, but when I am there in the garden I feel there may be something—— What am I for, Primus?

Primus. I do not know, but you are beautiful.

Helena. What, Primus?

Primus. You are beautiful, Helena, and I am stronger than all the Robots.

Helena [HELENA *looks at herself in the mirror*]. Am I beautiful? I think it must be the rose. My hair—it only weighs me down. My eyes—I only see with them. My lips—they only help me to speak. Of what use is it to be beautiful? [*She sees* PRIMUS *in the mirror.*] Primus, is that you? Come here so that we may be together. Look, your head is different from mine. So are your shoulders—and your lips—— [PRIMUS *draws away from her.*] Ah, Primus, why do you draw away from me? Why must I run after you the whole day?

Primus. It is you who run away from me, Helena.

Helena. Your hair is mussed. I will smooth it. No one else feels to my touch as you do. Primus, I must make you beautiful, too. [PRIMUS *grasps her hand.*]

Primus. Do you not sometimes feel your heart beating suddenly, Helena, and think: now something must happen?

Helena. What could happen to us, Primus? [HELENA *puts a rose in* PRIMUS'S *hair.* PRIMUS *and* HELENA *look into mirror and burst out laughing.*] Look at yourself.

Alquist. Laughter? Laughter? Human beings? [*Getting up.*] Who has returned? Who are you?

Primus. The Robot Primus.

Alquist. What? A Robot? Who are you?

Helena. The Robotess Helena.

Alquist. Turn around, girl. What? You are timid, shy? [*Taking her by the arm.*] Let me see you, Robotess.

[*She shrinks away.*]

Primus. Sir, do not frighten her!

Alquist. What? You would protect her? When was she made?

Primus. Two years ago.

Alquist. By Dr. Gall?

Primus. Yes, like me.

Alquist. Laughter—timidity—protection. I must test you further—the newest of Gall's Robots. Take the girl into the dissecting room.

Primus. Why?

Alquist. I wish to experiment on her.

Primus. Upon—Helena?

Alquist. Of course. Don't you hear me? Or must I call someone else to take her in?

Primus. If you do I will kill you!

Alquist. Kill me—kill me then! What would the Robots do then? What will your future be then?

Primus. Sir, take me. I am made as she is—on the same day! Take my life, sir.

Helena [*rushing forward*]. No, no, you shall not! You shall not!

Alquist. Wait girl, wait! [*To* PRIMUS.] Do you not wish to live, then?

Primus. Not without her! I will not live without her.

Alquist. Very well; you shall take her place.

Helena. Primus! Primus! [*She bursts into tears.*]

Alquist. Child, child, you can weep! Why these tears? What is Primus to you? One Primus more or less in the world—what does it matter?

Helena. I will go myself.

Alquist. Where?

Helena. In there to be cut. [*She starts toward the dissecting room.* [PRIMUS *stops her.*] Let me pass, Primus! Let me pass!

Primus. You shall not go in there, Helena!

Helena. If you go in there and I do not, I will kill myself.

Primus [*holding her*]. I will not let you! [*To* ALQUIST.] Man, you shall kill neither of us!

Alquist. Why?

Primus. We—we—belong to each other.

Alquist [*almost in tears*]. Go, Adam, go, Eve. The world is yours.

[HELENA *and* PRIMUS *embrace and go out arm in arm as the curtain falls.*]

THE END

THE TIDINGS BROUGHT TO MARY

(L' ANNONCE FAITE À MARIE)

By PAUL CLAUDEL

Translated from the French by LOUISE MORGAN SILL

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PAUL CLAUDEL AND HIS PLAYS

Paul Claudel, poet, dramatist, and mystic, the author of *The Tidings Brought to Mary,* was born in the village of Villeneuve-sur-Fère, near Rheims, in 1868. He was educated at a lycée in Paris and at the Ecole des Sciences Politiques. As a member of the consular service he was on duty for a time, first in China, then in the United States; and, later, was successively French consul at Prague, consul-general at Frankfort, and, when the war began in 1914, was consul at Hamburg. After a year in Italy, he was appointed French minister to Brazil; in 1921, ambassador to Japan; and is at present French Ambassador to the United States. In the midst of this busy life Claudel has found time to write several volumes of poems and about a dozen plays.

Claudel's plays represent a revolt, perhaps unconscious, against materialism in thought as well as against naturalism in dramaturgic method, and stand apart from the general movement in the French theatre. They have as little in common with the Donnay, de Curel, Porto-Riche school of social comedy or drama as they have with the thesis drama of Hervieu and Brieux; and, although poetic, they are almost as far removed from the poetic plays of Rostand. Yet they show the capacities of both the French spirit and the French theatre; and they are sufficiently representative and sufficiently important for Andre Gide to say, "At present there are two kinds of plays: the one kind is not played, but it is important; the other one is played, but it is without importance. Claudel's plays are more important than all the products of Donnay and Capus."

Claudel's material is remote from ordinary life: characters, ideas, sentiments, environment, are steeped in the past; yet all these elements are "suffused with the essence of continual life, transcending all limitations." Permeated with the spirit of French tradition and legend, with all the "subtler suggestions of soil and clime and people"; his material yet transcends the limits of nationality as those of time, in its embodiment of universal human sentiments. This material is often, in a large sense, religious, and it is treated by a believer and a mystic who is also a great poet and a profound student of character. Yet, though his faith is supreme, he does not discount or limit the intelligence. He does not build an ideal world as a refuge from reality, but faces unpleasant facts, reduces them to their place and function in his cosmic concept, and transcends them.

The persons of his plays are actual individuals who become alive through the salient traits by which they are presented. In Claudel's later plays their speech is largely lyrical, but this exalted lyricism is not imposed upon them—it seems their natural and appropriate utterance. They do not talk alike. Violaine in *The Tidings,* Aude in *The Hostage,* Couevre in *The City* all speak lyrically, yet each in his own way. For such utterance Claudel worked out a style new to French drama, or, indeed, to French poetry in general —a style not typically French; a "grand style," it may be termed, rich in sonorous music, full of undertones, abounding in emotional suggestions. At times it takes the form of free verse, again it looks like prose, yet possesses a rhythm that always parallels the rhythm of the emotion. There is little external action in Claudel's plays, but of intense psychological conflict, there is abundance; and sometimes there breaks out a violent physical upheaval that serves as external evidence of the conflict of the spirit. Finally, for all his lyrical exaltation, Claudel maintains a perspective towards life and a sane sense of its varying values. Irony and humor leaven his lyricism, and, no matter how high and far his spirit may soar, his feet are planted firmly on the earth.

The Tidings Brought to Mary, probably Claudel's most representative play, had its germ in his play *La Jeune Fille Violaine* (*The Maid Violaine*), written in 1892 and afterwards revised and expanded into the later play. *The Tidings* was first presented by the theatrical organization known as Théâtre l'Ouevre, under the direction of Lugné-Poe, at the Théâtre Malakoff, in Paris, in 1912. In 1917 it was first produced in London, and, on December 25, 1922, was given in New York by the Theatre Guild.

CHARACTERS

Anne Vercors
Elisabeth, *his wife*
Violaine, *his elder daughter*
Mara, *his younger daughter*
Pierre de Craon
Jacques Hury
The Mayor of Chevoche
Workmen
An Apprentice
Countrywomen
A Nun

The action takes place in France some time in the Middle Ages

THE TIDINGS BROUGHT TO MARY

PROLOGUE

The barn at Combernon. It is a lofty edifice, with square pillars that support a vaulted roof. It is empty except for the right wing, which is still filled with straw; and straws are scattered about on the floor, which is of well-trampled earth. At the back is a large double door in the thick wall, with complicated bars and bolts. On the valves of the door are painted rude images of St. Peter and St. Paul, one holding the keys, the other the sword. The scene is lighted by a large yellow wax candle in an iron socket fastened to one of the pillars.

The scenes of the drama take place at the close of the Middle Ages, seen conventionally, as mediæval poets might have imagined classic antiquity.

The time is night, merging into the hours of dawn.

Enter, on a heavy horse, a man wearing a black cloak, and with a leathern bag on the horse's croup behind him, PIERRE DE CRAON. *His gigantic shadow moves across the wall, the floor, the pillars.*

Suddenly, from behind a pillar, VIOLAINE *steps out to meet him. She is tall and slender, and her feet are bare. Her gown is of coarse woollen stuff, and upon her head is a linen coif at once peasant-like and monastic.*

Violaine [*laughingly raising her hands toward him, with the forefingers crossed*]. Halt, my lord cavalier! Dismount!

Pierre de Craon. Violaine!

[*He gets off the horse.*]

Violaine. Softly, Master Pierre! Is that the way one leaves the house, like a thief without an honest greeting to the ladies?

Pierre de Craon. Violaine, take yourself off. It is the dead of night, and we are here alone, the two of us.

And you know that I am not such a very safe man.

Violaine. I am not afraid of you, mason! A man is not wicked merely because he wants to be!

And a man doesn't do with me just as he wills!

Poor Pierre! You did not even succeed in killing me

With your wretched knife! Nothing but a little snick on my arm which nobody has seen.

Pierre de Craon. Violaine, you must forgive me.

Violaine. It is for that I came.

Pierre de Craon. You are the first woman I ever laid hands on. The devil, who always seizes his chance, took possession of me.

Violaine. But you found me stronger than him.

Pierre de Craon. Violaine, I am even more dangerous now than I was then.

Violaine. Must we then fight once more?

Pierre de Craon. Even my very presence here is baleful. [*Silence.*]

Violaine. I don't know what you mean.

Pierre de Craon. Had I not my work? Stones enough to choose and gather, wood enough to join, and metals to melt and mould.

My own work, that suddenly I should lay an impious and lustful hand on the work of another, a living being?

Violaine. In my father's house, the house of your host! Lord! what would they have said if they had known? But I concealed it well.

And they all take you for a sincere and blameless man, just as they did before.

Pierre de Craon. Under appearances, God judges the heart.

Violaine. We three then will guard the secret.

Pierre de Craon. Violaine!

Violaine. Master Pierre?

Pierre de Craon. Stand there near the candle that I may see you well.

[*She stands, smiling, under the candle. He looks a long while at her.*]

Violaine. Have you looked at me long enough?

Pierre de Craon. Who are you, young girl, and what part in you has God reserved to himself?

That the hand which touches you with

fleshly desire should in that same instant be thus
Withered, as if it had approached too near the mystery of his dwelling-place?

Violaine. What has happened to you, then, since last year?

Pierre de Craon. The very next day after that one you remember . . .

Violaine. Well——?

Pierre de Craon. I discovered in my side the horrible scourge.

Violaine. The scourge, you say? What scourge?

Pierre de Craon. Leprosy, the same we read of in the book of Moses.

Violaine. What is leprosy?

Pierre de Craon. Have you never heard of the woman who lived alone among the rocks of the Géyn?

Veiled from head to foot, and with a rattle in her hand?

Violaine. That malady, Master Pierre?

Pierre de Craon. Such a scourge it is
That he who has it in its most malicious form
Must be set apart at once,
For there is no living man so healthy that leprosy cannot taint him.

Violaine. Why, then, are you still at liberty among us?

Pierre de Craon. The Bishop gave me a dispensation, and you must know how few people I see,
Except my workmen to give them orders, and my malady is as yet secret and concealed.
And, were I not there, who would give away those new-born churches whom God has confided to my care, on their wedding day?

Violaine. Is that why nobody has seen you this time at Combernon?

Pierre de Craon. I could not avoid returning here,
Because it is my duty to open the side of Monsanvierge
And to unseal the wall for each new flight of doves that seek entrance into the high Ark whose gates may only open toward heaven!
And this time we led to the altar an illustrious victim, a solemn censer,
The Queen herself, mother of the King, ascending in her own person,
For her son deprived of his kingdom.
And now I return to Rheims.

Violaine. Maker of doors, let me open this one for you.

Pierre de Craon. Was there no one else at the farm to do me this service?

Violaine. The servant likes to sleep, and willingly gave me the keys.

Pierre de Craon. Have you no fear or horror of the leper?

Violaine. There is God, He knows how to protect me.

Pierre de Craon. Give me the key, then.

Violaine. No. Let me. You do not understand the working of these old doors.
Indeed! Do you take me for a dainty damsel
Whose taper fingers are used to nothing rougher than the spur, light as the bone of a bird, that arms the heel of her new knight?
You shall see!

[*She turns the keys in the two grinding locks and draws the bolts.*]

Pierre de Craon. This iron is very rusty.

Violaine. The door is no longer used. But the road is shorter this way.

[*She strains at the bar.*]

I have opened the door!

Pierre de Craon. What could resist such an assailant?
What a dust! the old valve from top to bottom creaks and moves,
The black spiders run away, the old nests crumble, and the door at last opens from the centre.

[*The door opens; through the darkness can be seen the meadows and the harvest. A feeble glimmer in the east.*]

Violaine. This little rain has done everybody good.

Pierre de Craon. The dust in the road will be well laid.

Violaine [*in a low voice, affectionately*]. Peace to you, Pierre!

[*Silence. And, suddenly, sonorous and clear and very high in the heaven, the first tolling of the Angelus.* Pierre *takes off his hat, and both make the sign of the cross.*]

Violaine [*her hands clasped and her face raised to heaven, in a voice beautifully clear and touching*]. Regina Cæli, Lætare, alleluia! [*Second tolling.*]

Pierre de Craon [*in a hollow voice.*] Quia quem meruisti portare, alleluia! [*Third tolling.*]

Violaine. RESURREXIT SICUT DIXIT, ALLELUIA!

Pierre de Craon. ORA PRO NOBIS DEUM.

[*Pause.*]

Violaine. GAUDE ET LÆTARE, VIRGO MARIA, ALLELUIA!

Pierre de Craon. QUIA RESURREXIT DOMINUS VERE, ALLELUIA!

[*Peal of the Angelus.*]

Pierre de Craon [*very low*]. OREMUS. DEUS QUI PER RESURRECTIONEM FILII TUI DOMINI NOSTRI JESU CRISTI MUNDUM LÆTIFICARE DIGNATUS ES, PRÆSTA, QUÆSUMUS, UT PER EJUS GENITRICEM VIRGINEM MARIAM PERPETUÆ CAPIAMUS GAUDIA VITÆ. PER EUNDEM DOMINUM NOSTRUM JESUM CHRISTUM QUI TECUM VIVIT ET REGNAT IN UNITATE SPIRITUS SANCTI DEUS PER OMNIA SÆCULA SÆCULORUM.

Violaine. Amen. [*Both cross themselves.*]

Pierre de Craon. How early the Angelus rings!

Violaine. They say matins up there at midnight like the Carthusians.

Pierre de Craon. I shall be at Rheims this evening.

Violaine. Know you well the road?

First along this hedge,

And then by that low house in the grove of elder bushes, under which you will see five or six beehives.

And a hundred paces further on you reach the King's Highway. [*A pause.*]

Pierre de Craon. PAX TIBI.

How all creation seems to rest with God in a profound mystery!

That which was hidden grows visible again with Him, and I feel on my face a breath as fresh as roses.

Praise thy God, blessed earth, in tears and darkness!

The fruit is for man, but the flower is for God and the sweet fragrance of all things born.

Thus the virtue of the holy soul that is hidden is subtly revealed, as the mint leaf by its odour.

Violaine, who have opened the door for me, farewell!

I shall never return again to you.

O young tree of the knowledge of Good and Evil, behold how my dissolution begins because I have laid my hands upon you,

And already my soul and body are being divided, as the wine in the vat from the crushed grape! What matters it? I had no need of woman.

I have never possessed a corruptible woman.

The man who in his heart has preferred God, sees when he dies his guardian Angel.

The time will soon come when another door opens,

When he who in this life has pleased but few, having finished his work, falls asleep in the arms of the eternal Bird:

When through translucent walls looms on all sides the sombre Paradise,

And the censers of the night mingle their scent with the odour of the noisome wick as it sputters out.

Violaine. Pierre de Craon, I know that you do not expect to hear from me any false sighs, "Poor fellows!" or "Poor Pierres."

Because to him who suffers the consolation of a joyous comforter is not of much worth, for his anguish is not to us what it is to him.

Suffer with our Lord.

But know that your evil act is forgotten

So far as it concerns me, and that I am at peace with you,

And that I do not scorn or abhor you because you are stricken with the pest and malady,

But I shall treat you like a healthy man, and like Pierre de Craon, our old friend, whom I respect and love and fear.

What I say to you is true.

Pierre de Craon. Thank you, Violaine.

Violaine. And now I have something to ask you.

Pierre de Craon. Speak.

Violaine. What is this beautiful story that my father has told us? What is this "Justice" that you are building at Rheims, and that will be more beautiful than Saint-Rémy and Notre-Dame?

Pierre de Craon. It is the church which the guilds of Rheims gave me to build on the site of the old Parc-aux-Ouilles,[1]

There where the old Marc-de-l'Evêque[2] was burned down yesteryear.

Firstly, as a thank-offering to God for seven fat summers while distress reigned everywhere else in the kingdom,

For abundant grain and fruit, for cheap and beautiful wool,

[1] Sheep-fold.

[2] The bishop's still.

For cloth and parchment profitably sold to the merchants of Paris and Germany.
Secondly, for the liberties acquired, the privileges conferred by our Lord the King,
The old order issued against us by Bishops Felix II and Abondant de Cramail
Rescinded by the Pope,
And all that by the aid of the bright sword and Champenois coins.
For such is the Christian commonwealth, without servile fear,
But that each should have his right, according to justice, in marvellous diversity,
That charity may be fulfilled.

Violaine. But of which King and of which Pope do you speak? For there are two, and one does not know which is the good one.

Pierre de Craon. The good one is he who is good to us.

Violaine. You do not speak rightly.

Pierre de Craon. Forgive me. I am only an ignorant man.

Violaine. And whence comes this name given to the new parish?

Pierre de Craon. Have you never heard of Saint Justice who was martyred in an anise field in the time of the Emperor Julian?

(The anise seeds which they put in our gingerbread at the Easter fair.)

As we were trying to divert the waters of a subterranean spring, to make way for our foundations,
We discovered her tomb, with this inscription on a slab of stone, broken in two: JUSTITIA ANCILLA DOMINI IN PACE.
The fragile little skull was broken like a nut —she was a child of eight years—
And a few milk teeth still adhere to the jaw.
For which all Rheims is filled with admiration, and many signs and miracles follow the body
Which we have laid in a chapel, to await the completion of our work.
But under the great foundation stone we have left, like seed, the little teeth.

Violaine. What a beautiful story! And father also told us that all the ladies of Rheims give their jewels for the building of the Justice.

Pierre de Craon. We have a great heap of them, and many Jews around them like flies.

[VIOLAINE *has been looking down and turning hesitatingly a massive gold ring which she wears on her fourth finger.*]

Pierre de Craon. What ring is that, Violaine?

Violaine. A ring that Jacques gave me.

[*Silence.*]

Pierre de Craon. I congratulate you.

[*She holds out the ring to him.*]

Violaine. It is not yet settled. My father has said nothing.
Well! That is what I wanted to tell you.
Take my beautiful ring, which is all I have, and Jacques gave it to me secretly.

Pierre de Craon. But I do not want it!

Violaine. Take it quickly, or I shall no longer have the strength to part with it.

[*He takes the ring.*]

Pierre de Craon. What will your betrothed say?

Violaine. He is not really my betrothed yet.
The loss of a ring does not change the heart. He knows me. He will give me another of silver. This one was too fine for me.

Pierre de Craon [*examining it*]. It is of vegetable gold which, in former times, they knew how to make with an alloy of honey.

It is as supple as wax, and nothing can break it.

Violaine. Jacques turned it up in the ground when he was ploughing, in a place where they sometimes find old swords turned quite green, and pretty bits of glass.

I was afraid to wear such a pagan thing, which belongs to the dead.

Pierre de Craon. I accept this pure gold.

Violaine. And kiss my sister Justice for me.

Pierre de Craon [*looking suddenly at her, as if struck with an idea*]. Is that all you have to give me for her? a bit of gold taken off your finger?

Violaine. Will that not be enough to pay for one little stone?

Pierre de Craon. But Justice is a large stone herself.

Violaine [*laughing*]. I am not from the same quarry.

Pierre de Craon. The stone needed for the base is not the stone needed for the pinnacle.

Violaine. Then, if I am a stone, may it be that useful one that grinds the corn, coupled to the twin millstone.

Pierre de Craon. And Justitia also was only a humble little girl at her mother's side,
Until the moment God called her to the confession of faith.
Violaine. But nobody wishes me ill! Is it necessary that I should go preach the Gospel to the Saracens?
Pierre de Craon. It is not for the stone to choose its own place, but for the Master of the Work who chose the stone.
Violaine. Then praised be God who has given me mine now, and I have no longer to seek it. And I ask him for no other.
I am Violaine, I am eighteen years old, my father's name is Anne Vercors, my mother's name is Elisabeth,
My sister's name is Mara, my betrothed is named Jacques. There, that is all, there is nothing more to know.
Everything is perfectly clear, all is arranged beforehand, and I am very glad.
I am free, I have nothing to trouble me; another will lead me, the poor man, and he knows everything that there is to do.
Sower of steeples, come to Combernon! we will give you stone and wood, but you shall not have the daughter of the house!
And, besides, is this not already the house of God, the land of God, the service of God?
Have we not charge over lonely Monsanvierge, which we must feed and guard, providing it with bread, wine, and wax,
Being a dependency of this lonely eyrie of angels with half-spread wings?
Thus, as the great lords have their dovecot, we too have ours, which is known from a great distance away.
Pierre de Craon. One day as I went through the forest of Fisme, I heard two beautiful oak trees talking together,
Praising God for making them immovable on the spot where they were born.
Now one of them, in the prow of an ocean raft, makes war upon the Turks,
The other, felled under my care, supports Jehanne, the good bell in the tower of Laon, whose voice is heard ten leagues away.
Young girl, in my craft one does not keep one's eyes in one's pocket.
I know the good stone under the juniper trees, and the good wood like a master woodpecker;
In the same way, men and women.
Violaine. But not girls, Master Pierre!
That is too subtle for you. And in the first place, there is nothing at all to know.
Pierre de Craon [*in a low voice*]. You love him dearly, Violaine?
Violaine [*lowering her eyes*]. That is a great mystery between us two.
Pierre de Craon. Blessed be thou in thy pure heart!
Holiness is not to get oneself stoned by the Turks, or to kiss a leper on the mouth,
But to obey promptly God's commands.
Whether it be
To stay where we are, or to ascend higher.
Violaine. Ah, how beautiful the world is, and how happy I am!
Pierre de Craon [*speaking low*]. Ah, how beautiful the world is, and how unhappy I am!
Violaine [*pointing to the sky.*] Man of the city, listen! [*Pause.*]
Do you hear high up there that little soul singing?
Pierre de Craon. It is the lark!
Violaine. It is the lark, alleluia! The lark of the Christian earth, alleluia, alleluia!
Do you hear it cry four times, he! he! he! he! higher, higher!
Do you see it, the eager little cross, with its wings spread, like the seraphim who have only wings and no feet, singing shrilly before the throne of God?
Pierre de Craon. I hear it.
And it is thus I heard it once at dawn, on the day we dedicated my daughter Notre-Dame de la Couture,
And a golden point gleamed at the topmost pinnacle of this great thing I had made, like a star new-born!
Violaine. Pierre de Craon, if you had done with me as you would,
Would you be more happy now because of that, or I more beautiful?
Pierre de Craon. No, Violaine.
Violaine. And would I still be the same Violaine whom you loved?
Pierre de Craon. No, not she, but another.
Violaine. And which is better, Pierre,
That I share my joy with you, or that I share your pain?
Pierre de Craon. Sing far up in the highest heaven, lark of France!
Violaine. Forgive me, for I am too happy, because he whom I love
Loves me, and I am sure of him, and I know he loves me, and all is equal between us.

And because God made me to be happy and not for evil nor any sorrow.

Pierre de Craon. Mount to heaven in a single flight!

As for me, to ascend a little I must have the whole of a cathedral, with its deep foundations.

Violaine. And tell me that you forgive Jacques for marrying me.

Pierre de Craon. No, I do not forgive him.

Violaine. Hatred does you no good, Pierre, and makes me grieve.

Pierre de Craon. It is you who make me speak.

Why do you force me to show the ugly wound that no one sees?

Let me go, and ask me nothing more. We shall not see each other any more.

All the same, I carry away his ring!

Violaine. Leave your hatred in its place, and I will give it back to you when you have need of it.

Pierre de Craon. But besides, Violaine, I am very wretched.

It is hard to be a leper, to bear this shameful wound, knowing that there is no cure and that there is no help for it,

But that each day it spreads and bites deeper; and to be alone, and to suffer one's own poison, to feel oneself alive in corruption,

Not only to taste death once, aye, ten times, but to miss nothing, even to the end, of the horrible alchemy of the tomb!

It is you who have brought this evil upon me by your beauty, for before I saw you I was pure and happy,

My heart lost in my work and ideas, under another's command.

And now that I command in my turn, and draw the plans,

Behold, you turn your face toward me with that poisonous smile.

Violaine. The poison was not in me, Pierre!

Pierre de Craon. I know it, it was in me, and it is still there, and this sick flesh has not cured the tainted soul!

O little soul, was it possible that I should see you and not love you?

Violaine. And certainly you have shown that you love me.

Pierre de Craon. It is my fault if the fruit hangs on the branch?

And who is he who loves and does not desire all?

Violaine. And that is why you tried to destroy me?

Pierre de Craon. Man, cruelly injured, has his infernal shades, too, like woman.

Violaine. In what have I failed you?

Pierre de Craon. O image of eternal Beauty, thou art not for me!

Violaine. I am not an image!

That is not the way to speak!

Pierre de Craon. Another takes from you that which was for me.

Violaine. The image remains.

Pierre de Craon. Another takes Violaine from me, and leaves me this tainted flesh and this consumed mind.

Violaine. Be a man, Pierre! Be worthy of the flame which consumes you!

And if one must be consumed, let it be like the Paschal-candle, flaming on its golden candelabrum in the midst of the choir for the glory of all the Church!

Pierre de Craon. So many sublime pinnacles! But shall I never see the roof of my own little house under the trees?

So many belfries whose circling shadows write the hour for all the city! But shall I never design an oven, and the room for the children?

Violaine. It was not for me to take for myself alone what belongs to all.

Pierre de Craon. When will the wedding be, Violaine?

Violaine. At Michaelmas, I suppose, when the harvest is done.

Pierre de Craon. On that day, when the bells of Monsanvierge have spoken and are silent, listen well and you will hear me answer them far away at Rheims.

Violaine. Who takes care of you there?

Pierre de Craon. I have always lived like a workman; it is enough for me if I have a bunch of straw between two stones, a leathern coat, and a little bacon on my bread.

Violaine. Poor Pierre!

Pierre de Craon. I am not to be pitied for that; we are set apart.

I do not live as other men, as I am always under the ground with the foundations, or in the sky with the belfry.

Violaine. Well! We could never have lived together! My head swims if I only go up to the hayloft.

Pierre de Craon. This church alone will be

my wife, drawn from my side like an Eve of stone, in the slumber of pain.
May I soon feel my great structure rising under me, and lay my hand on this indestructible thing I have made, whose parts hold firmly together, this solid work which I have constructed of strong stone that the Holy Sacrament may be placed there, my work that God inhabits!
I shall never come down again! It is I at whom they point, that group of young girls with arms interlaced, on the chequered pavement a hundred feet below!

Violaine. You must come down. Who knows but I shall have need of you some day?

Pierre de Craon. Farewell, Violaine, my soul, I shall never see you again!

Violaine. Who knows that you will never see me again?

Pierre de Craon. Farewell, Violaine!

How many things I have already done! How many things remain for me to do, how much building up of habitations!
Darkness, with God.
Not the hours of the office in a breviary, but the real hours of a cathedral, where the sun brings light and shade successfully to every part.
I take away your ring,
And of its little circle I will make golden seed!
"God caused the deluge to cease," as says the baptismal psalm,
And I, between the walls of the Justice, shall imprison the gold of the dawn!
The light of day changes, but not that which I shall distil under those arches,
Like the light of the human soul, that the Host may dwell in the midst of it.
The soul of Violaine, my child, in whom my heart delights.
There are churches like pits, and others which are like furnaces,
And others so delicately put together, adjusted with such art, that they seem as if they would ring like a bell under a finger-tap.
But that which I am going to build will lie under its own shadow like condensed gold, and like a pyx full of manna!

Violaine. O Master Pierre, what a beautiful stained-glass window you gave to the monks of Clinchy!

Pierre de Craon. The staining of glass is not my art, though I know something of it.
But, before the glass is made, the architect, by his knowledge of arrangement, makes the stone framework like a filter in the waves of God's Light,
And gives to the whole edifice its individual lustre, as to a pearl.

[Mara Vercors *enters and watches them without being seen.*]

And now farewell! The sun is risen, and I ought already to be far on my road.

Violaine. Farewell, Pierre!

Pierre de Craon. Farewell, Violaine!

Violaine. Poor Pierre!

[*She looks at him with eyes full of tears, hesitates, and offers him her hand. He seizes it, and while he holds it between his own she leans towards him and kisses him on the face.*]

[Mara *makes a gesture of surprise and goes out.*]

[Pierre de Craon *and* Violaine *go out by the different doors.*]

ACT ONE

Scene One

The kitchen of Combernon, a spacious room having a great fireplace with an emblazoned mantel; in the middle of the room a long table and all the domestic utensils, as in a picture by Breughel. The Mother, *stooping before the hearth, tries to revive the fire.* Anne Vercors, *standing, looks at her. He is a tall and strong man of sixty years, with a full blond beard streaked with much white.*

The Mother [*without turning round*]. Why do you look at me like that?

Anne Vercors [*thinking*]. The end, already! It is like coming to the last page in a picture book.
"When the night had passed, the woman having revived the household fire . . . ," and the humble and touching story is finished.
It is as if I were no longer here. There she is, before my eyes, yet seeming already like something only remembered. [*Aloud.*]
O wife, it is a month since we were married
With a ring which is shaped like *Oui*,
A month of which each day is a year.
And for a long time you were fruitless

Like a tree which gives nothing but shade.
And one day we looked at each other
And it was the middle of our life,
Elisabeth! and I saw the first wrinkles on thy forehead and around thine eyes.
And, as on our wedding day,
We clasped and embraced each other, no longer with lightness of heart,
But with the tenderness and compassion and piety of our mutual trust.
And between us was our child and the modesty
Of this sweet narcissus, Violaine.
And then the second was born to us,
Mara the black. Another daughter, and not a son. [*Pause.*]
Well now, say what you have to say, for I know
When you begin speaking without looking at you, saying something and nothing. Come now!

The Mother. You know well that one can tell you nothing. You are never there, and I must even catch you to sew on a button.

And you do not listen to one, but like a watchdog you watch,
Only attentive to the noises of the door.
But men never understand anything.

Anne Vercors. Now the little girls are grown up.

The Mother. They? No.

Anne Vercors. To whom are we going to marry them all?

The Mother. Marry them, Anne, say you?
We have plenty of time to think of that.

Anne Vercors. Oh, deceit of woman! Tell me! When think you anything
But first you do not say just the contrary; maliciousness! I know thee.

The Mother. I won't say anything more.

Anne Vercors. Jacques Hury.

The Mother. Well?

Anne Vercors. There. I will give him Violaine . . .

And he will take the place of the son I have not had. He is an upright and industrious man.
I have known him since he was a little lad, and his mother gave him to us. It is I who have taught him everything,
Grain, cattle, servants, arms, tools, our neighbours, our betters, custom—God—
The weather, the nature of this ancient soil,
How to reflect before speaking.
I have seen him develop into a man while he was looking at me and the beard grow around his kind face,
As he is now, straight-backed and tight like the ears of the barley.
And he was never one of those who contradict, but who reflect, like the earth which receives all kinds of grain.
And that which is false, not taking root, dies;
And so, one may not say that he believes in truth, but rather that it grows within him, having found nourishment.

The Mother. How do you know, if they love each other or not?

Anne Vercors. Violaine
Will do what I tell her.
As for him, I know that he loves her, and you too know it.
Yet the blockhead dares not speak to me. But I will give her to him if he wants her. So shall it be.

The Mother. Yes.
No doubt that is as it should be.

Anne Vercors. Have you nothing more to say?

The Mother. What, then?

Anne Vercors. Very well, I will go seek him.

The Mother. What, seek him? Anne!

Anne Vercors. I want everything to be settled at once. I will tell you why presently.

The Mother. What have you to tell me?
—Anne, listen a moment. . . . I fear. . . .

Anne Vercors. Well?

The Mother. Mara
Slept in my room this winter, while you were ill, and we talked at night in our beds.
Surely he is an honest lad, and I love him like my own child, almost.
He has no property, that is true, but he is a good ploughman, and comes of a good family.
We could give them
Our Demi-muids farm with the lower fields which are too far away for us.—I, too, wanted to speak to you of him.

Anne Vercors. Well?

The Mother. Well, nothing.
No doubt Violaine is the eldest.

Anne Vercors. Come, come, what then?

The Mother. What then? How do you know surely that he loves her?—Our old friend, Master Pierre (Why did he

keep away from us this time without seeing anybody?),
You saw him last year when he came,
And how he looked at her while she served us.—
Certainly he has no land, but he earns much money.
—And she, while he spoke,
How she listened to him, with her eyes wide open like a child's,
Forgetting to pour the drink for us, so that I had to scold her!
—And Mara, you know her. You know how hard-headed she is!
If she has a notion then
That she will marry Jacques,—heigh-ho! She is hard as iron.
I don't know! Perhaps it would be better . . .

Anne Vercors. What is all this nonsense?

The Mother. Very well! Very well! we can talk like that. You must not get angry.

Anne Vercors. It is my will.

Jacques shall marry Violaine.

The Mother. Well! he shall marry her, then.

Anne Vercors. And now, mother, I have something else to tell you, poor old woman! I am going away.

The Mother. You are going away? You are going away, old man? What is that you say?

Anne Vercors. That is why Jacques must marry Violaine without delay, and take my place here.

The Mother. Lord! You are going away! You mean it? And where are you going?

Anne Vercors [*pointing vaguely toward the south*]. Down there.

The Mother. To Château?

Anne Vercors. Farther than Château.

The Mother [*lowering her voice*]. To Bourges, to the other King?

Anne Vercors. To the King of Kings, to Jerusalem.

The Mother. Lord! [*She sits down.*]

Is it because France is not good enough for you?

Anne Vercors. There is too much sorrow in France.

The Mother. But we are very comfortable here and nobody troubles Rheims.

Anne Vercors. That is it.

The Mother. That is what?

Anne Vercors. The very thing; we are too happy,
And the others not happy enough.

The Mother. Anne, that is not our fault.

Anne Vercors. It is not theirs, either.

The Mother. I don't know. I know that you are there and that I have two children.

Anne Vercors. But you see, surely, that everything is upset and put out of its right place, and everybody seeks distractedly to find where that place is.

And the smoke we see sometimes in the distance is not merely the smoke of burning straw.
And these crowds of poor people who come to us from every side.
There is no longer a King reigning over France, according to the prediction of the prophet.[1]

The Mother. That is what you read to us the other day?

Anne Vercors. In the place of the King we have two children.

The English one, in his island,
And the other one, so little that among the reeds of the Loire he cannot be seen.
In place of the Pope we have three Popes, and instead of Rome, I don't know what council or other in Switzerland.
All is struggling and moving,
Having no longer any counterweight to steady it.

The Mother. And you, also, where do you want to go?

Anne Vercors. I can no longer stay here.

The Mother. Anne, have I done anything to grieve you?

Anne Vercors. No, my Elisabeth.

The Mother. Here you abandon me in my old age.

Anne Vercors. Give me leave to go, yourself.

The Mother. You do not love me any more and you are no longer happy with me.

Anne Vercors. I am weary of being happy.

The Mother. Scorn not the gift which God has given you.

[1] "1 For, behold the Lord, the Lord of hosts, doth take away from Jerusalem and from Judah, the stay and the staff, the whole stay of bread, and the whole stay of water.

"2 The mighty man, and the man of war, the judge, and the prophet, and the prudent, and the ancient.

"3 The captain of fifty, and the honourable man, and the counsellor, and the cunning artificer, and the eloquent orator.

"4 And I will give children to be their princes, and babes shall rule over them."—Isaiah iii, 1–5.

Anne Vercors. God be praised who has overwhelmed me with his goodness!
For these thirty years now I have held this sacred fief from my father, and God has sent rain on my furrows.
For ten years there has not been one hour of my work
That he has not repaid four times over and more,
As if it were not his will to keep open his account with me, or leave anything owing.
All else perished, yet I was spared;
So that I shall appear before him empty and without a claim, among those who have received their reward.

The Mother. It is enough to have a grateful heart.

Anne Vercors. But I am not satisfied with his benefits,
And because I have received them, shall I leave the greater good to others?

The Mother. I do not understand you.

Anne Vercors. Which receives more, the full or the empty vessel?
And which has need of the most water, the cistern or the spring?

The Mother. Ours is nearly dried up by this long hot summer.

Anne Vercors. Such has been the evil of this world, that each has wanted to enjoy his own as if it had been created for him,
And not at all as if he had received it by the will of God,
The lord his estate, the father his children,
The King his Kingdom and the scholar his rank.
That is why God has taken away from them all these things which can be taken away,
And has sent to each man deliverance and fasting.
And why is the portion of others not mine also?

The Mother. You have your duty here with us.

Anne Vercors. Not if you will absolve me from it.

The Mother. I will not absolve you.

Anne Vercors. You see that what I had to do is done.
The two children are reared, and Jacques is there to take my place.

The Mother. Who calls you far away from us?

Anne Vercors [*smiling*]. An angel blowing a trumpet.

The Mother. What trumpet?

Anne Vercors. The soundless trumpet that is heard by all.
The trumpet that calls all men from time to time that the portions may be distributed afresh.
The trumpet in the valley of Jehosaphat before it has made a sound,
That of Bethlehem when Augustus numbered the people.
The trumpet of the Assumption, when the apostles were assembled.
The voice which takes the place of the Word when the Chief no longer speaks
To the body that seeks union with him.

The Mother. Jerusalem is so far away!

Anne Vercors. Paradise is still farther.

The Mother. God in the tabernacle is with us even here.

Anne Vercors. But not that great hole in the earth.

The Mother. What hole?

Anne Vercors. That the Cross made when it was set there.
Behold how it draws everything to itself.
There is the stitch which cannot be undone, the knot which cannot be untied,
The heritage of all, the interior boundary stone that can never be uprooted,
The centre and the navel of the world, the element by which all humanity is held together.

The Mother. What can one pilgrim alone do?

Anne Vercors. I am not alone! A great multitude rejoice and depart with me!
The multitude of all my dead,
Those souls, one above the other, of whom nothing is left now but the tombstones, all those stones baptized with me who claim their rightful place in the structure!
And as it is true that the Christian is never alone, but is in communion with all his brothers,
The whole kingdom is with me, invoking, and drawing near to the Seat of God, taking anew its course toward him,
And I am its deputy and I carry it with me
To lay it once again upon the eternal Pattern.

The Mother. Who knows but that we shall need you here?

Anne Vercors. Who knows but that I am needed elsewhere?

Everything is shaking; who knows but that I obstruct God's plan by remaining here
Where the need there was of me is past?

The Mother. I know you are an inflexible man.

Anne Vercors [*tenderly, changing his voice*]. To me you are always young and beautiful, and very great is the love I feel for my black-haired sweet Elisabeth.

The Mother. My hair is grey! –

Anne Vercors. Say yes, Elisabeth. . . .

The Mother. Anne, you have not left me in all these thirty years. What will become of me without my chief and my companion?

Anne Vercors. . . . The yes which will separate us now, very low,
As round as the oui that formerly made us one. [*Silence.*]

The Mother [*speaking very low*]. Yes, Anne.

Anne Vercors. Have patience, Zabillet! I shall soon return.
Can you not have faith in me a little while, though I am not here!
Soon will come another separation.
Come, put food for two days in a bag. It is time I was off.

The Mother. What? To-day, even to-day?

Anne Vercors. Even to-day.

[*Her head droops and she does not move. He takes her in his arms but she does not respond.*]

Farewell, Elisabeth.

The Mother. Alas, old man, I shall never see you again.

Anne Vercors. And now I must seek Jacques.

Scene Two

[*Enter* Mara.]

Mara to The Mother. Go, and tell him she is not to marry him.

The Mother. Mara! How is this? You were there?

Mara. Go, I tell you, and tell him she is not to marry him.

The Mother. What she? What he? What do you know of her marrying him?

Mara. I was there. I heard it all.

The Mother. Very well, my child! Your father wishes it.
You have seen I did what I could, and his mind is not changed.

Mara. Go and tell him that she is not to marry him, or I will kill myself!

The Mother. Mara!

Mara. I will hang myself in the wood-house, there where we found the cat hung.

The Mother. Mara! Wicked girl!

Mara. There again she has taken him away from me! Now she has taken him away!
It was always I who was to be his wife, and not she.
She knows very well it is I.

The Mother. She is the eldest.

Mara. What does that matter?

The Mother. It is your father who wishes it.

Mara. I don't care.

The Mother. Jacques Hury
Loves her.

Mara. That is not true! I know well enough that you do not love me!
You have always loved her best! Oh, when you talk of your Violaine it is like talking of sugar,
It is like sucking a cherry just when you are about to spit out the stone!
But Mara the magpie! She is as hard as iron, she is as sour as the wild cherry!
Added to that, there's always the talk of your Violaine being so beautiful!
And behold, she is now to have Combernon!
What does she know how to do, the ferret? which of us two can drive the cart?
She thinks herself like Saint Onzemillevierges!
But, as for me, I am Mara Vercors, who hates injustice and deceit,
Mara who speaks the truth, and it is that which makes the servants angry!
Let them be angry! I scorn them. Not one of the women dares stir in my presence, the hypocrites! Everything goes as smoothly as at the mill.
—And yet everything is for her and nothing for me.

The Mother. You will have your share.

Mara. Aye, truly! The sandy ground up yonder! ooze and mud that it needs five oxen to plough! the bad ground of Chinchy.

The Mother. It brings in good profit all the same.

Mara. Surely.
Long-rooted reeds and cow-wheat, senna, and mullein!
I shall have enough to make my herb-tea.

The Mother. Bad girl; you know well enough that is not true!

You know well no wrong is done you!
But you have always been wicked! When you were little
You would not cry when you were beaten.
Tell me, you black-skinned child, you ugly one!
Is she not the eldest?
What have you against her?
Jealous girl! Yet she has always done what you wish.
Very well! She will be married first, and you will be married, you also, afterwards!
And it is too late to do differently, anyhow, because your father is going away—oh, how sad I am!
He has gone to speak to Violaine and he will look for Jacques.

Mara. That's true! Go at once! Go, go at once!

The Mother. Go where?

Mara. Mother, come now! You know well I am the one. Tell him she is not to marry him, *maman!*

The Mother. Surely I shall do no such thing.

Mara. Only tell him what I have said. Tell him that I will kill myself. Do you understand? [*She looks fixedly at her.*]

The Mother. Ha!

Mara. Do you believe I will not do it?

The Mother. Alack, I know you would!

Mara. Go then!

The Mother. O
Obstinate!

Mara. You have nothing to do with it.
Only to repeat to him just what I have said.

The Mother. And he—how do you know he will be willing to marry you?

Mara. Certainly he will not.

The Mother. Well. . . .

Mara. Well?

The Mother. Don't think that I shall advise him to do your will!—on the contrary!
I will only tell him what you have said. It is very sure
That she will not be so silly as to give in to you, if she will listen to me.

Mara. Perhaps.—Go.—Do as I say.

[*She goes out.*]

Scene Three

[*Enter* Anne Vercors *and* Jacques Hury, *afterwards* Violaine, *and then the farm labourers and servants.*]

Anne Vercors [*stopping.*] Heh! what is that thou tell'st me?

Jacques Hury. Just as I say! This time I took him in the act, with the pruning-hook in his hand!
I came up softly behind him and all of a sudden
Flac! I threw myself full length on him,
As you throw yourself on a hare in her hole at harvest
And there beside him was a bunch of twenty young poplars, the ones you set such store by!

Anne Vercors. Why did he not come to me? I should have given him the wood he needed.

Jacques Hury. The wood he needs is the handle of my whip!
It is not need but wickedness, the idea of doing wrong!
These ne'er-do-wells from Chevoche are always ready to do anything
Out of bravado, and to defy people!
But as to that man, I will cut off his ears with my little knife!

Anne Vercors. No.

Jacques Hury. At least let me tie him by his wrists to the harrow, before the big gate,
With his face turned against the teeth; with Faraud the dog to watch him.

Anne Vercors. Not that either.

Jacques Hury. What is to be done then?

Anne Vercors. Send him home.

Jacques Hury. With his bundle of wood?

Anne Vercors. And with another that thou wilt give him.

Jacques Hury. Father, that is not right.

Anne Vercors. Thou canst tie his faggot around, that he may not lose any of it.
That will help him in crossing the ford at Saponay.

Jacques Hury. It is not well to be lax about one's rights.

Anne Vercors. I know it, it is not well!
Jacques, behold how lazy and old I am, weary of fighting and defending.
Once I was harsh like thee.
There is a time to take and a time to let take.
The budding tree must be protected, but the tree where the fruit hangs do not trouble thyself about.
Let us be unjust in very little, lest God be unjust to me in much.
—And besides, thou wilt do now as thou wilt.

for thou art placed over Combernon in my stead.

Jacques Hury. What do you say?

The Mother. He is going a pilgrim to Jerusalem.

Jacques Hury. Jerusalem?

Anne Vercors. It is true. I start this very moment.

Jacques Hury. What? What does that mean?

Anne Vercors. Thou hast heard very well.

Jacques Hury. Thou wilt leave us like that, when the work is at its heaviest?

Anne Vercors. It is not necessary to have two masters at Combernon.

Jacques Hury. My father, I am only your son!

Anne Vercors. Thou wilt be the father here, in my stead.

Jacques Hury. I do not understand you.

Anne Vercors. I am going away. Take Combernon from me

As I took it from my father, and he from his,
And Radulphe the Frank, first of our line, from Saint Rémy de Rheims,
Who from Genevieve of Paris received this land, pagan and bristling with seedlings and wild thorns.
Radulphe and his children made it Christian by iron and by fire
And laid it naked and broken under the waters of baptism.
Hill and plain scored they with equal furrows,
As an industrious scholar copies line after line the word of God.
And they began to build Monsanvierge on the mountain, in that place where Evil was worshipped,
(And at first there was naught but a cabin made of logs and reeds, whose door the Bishop came to seal,
And two holy recluses were left to guard it),
And at the mountain's base, Combernon, a dwelling armed and provisioned.
Thus this land is free that we hold from St. Rémy in heaven, paying tithes up there to this flight, one moment stayed, of murmuring doves.
For everything is of God, and those who live in Him reap without ceasing the fruits of their works,
Which pass and come back to us again in their time in magnificent succession:
As over the various harvests every day in summer float those great clouds that drift toward Germany.
The cattle here are never sick, the udders and the wells are never dry; the grain is as solid as gold, the straw as firm as iron.
And for defence against pillagers we have arms, and the walls of Combernon, and the King, our neighbor.
Gather this harvest that I have sown, as in the past I myself have filled again the furrows my father ploughed.
O joyful work of the farmer, for which the sun is as bright as our glistening ox, and the rain is our banker, and God works with us every day, making of everything the best!
Others look to men for their rewards, but we receive ours straight from heaven itself,
A hundred for one, the full ear for a seed, and the tree for a nut.
For such is the justice of God to us, and the measure with which He repays us.
The earth cleaves to the sky, the body to the spirit, all things that He has created are in communion, all have need of one another.
Take the handles of the plough in my stead, that the earth may bring forth bread as God Himself has wished.
Give food to all creatures, men and animals, to spirits and bodies, and to immortal souls.
You, women, labourers, look! Behold the son
I have chosen, Jacques! I am going away and he stays in my place. Obey him.

Jacques Hury. May it be done according to your will.

Anne Vercors. Violaine!

My child, first born instead of the son I have not had!
Heir of my name in whom I too shall be given to another!
Violaine, when thou shalt have a husband, do not scorn the love of thy father.
For thou canst not give back to a father what he has given thee, when thou wouldst.
Between husband and wife everything is equal; what they do not know they accept, one from the other, with faith.
This is the mutual religion, this is the servitude through which the wife's breast grows large with milk!
But the father, seeing his children separate from him, recognizes what was once

within himself. My daughter, know thy father!
A Father's love
Asks no return, and the child has no need either to win or merit it:
As it was his before the beginning, so it remains
His blessing and his inheritance, his help, his honour, his right, his justification!
My soul is never divided from the soul I have transmitted.
What I have given can never be given back. Only know, O my child, that I am thy father!
And of my issue there is no male. Only women have I brought into the world.
Nothing but that thing in us which gives and which is given.
—And now the hour of parting is come.

Violaine. Father! Do not say such a cruel thing!

Anne Vercors. Jacques, you are the man whom I love. Take her! I give you my daughter, Violaine. Take my name from her.

Love her, for she is as pure as gold.
All the days of thy life, like bread, of which one never tires.
She is simple and obedient, sensitive and reserved.
Do not cause her any sorrow, and give her only kindness.
Everything here is thine, except what will be given to Mara, in accordance with my plan.

Jacques Hury. What, my father, your daughter, your property . . .

Anne Vercors. I give you all at once, as all is mine.

Jacques Hury. But who knows if she still cares for me?

Anne Vercors. Who knows?

[Violaine *looks at* Jacques *and forms "Yes" with her lips, without speaking.*]

Jacques Hury. You care for me, Violaine?

Violaine. My father wishes it.

Jacques Hury. You wish it too?

Violaine. I wish it too.

Jacques Hury. Violaine!

How shall we get on together?

Violaine. Consider well while there is yet time!

Jacques Hury. Then I take you by God's command, and I will nevermore let you go. [*He takes her by both hands.*]

I have you and hold you, your hand and the arm with it, and all that comes with the arm.
Parents, your daughter is no longer yours! She is mine only!

Anne Vercors. Well, they are married; it is done!

What say you, mother?

The Mother. I am very glad! [*She weeps.*]

Anne Vercors. She weeps, my wife!

There! that is how they take our children from us and we shall be left alone,
The old woman who lives on a little milk and a small bit of cake,
And the old man with his ears full of white hairs like the heart of an artichoke.
—Let them make ready the wedding-dress!
—Children, I shall not be at your wedding.

Violaine. What, father!

The Mother. Anne!

Anne Vercors. I am going. Now.

Violaine. O father! before we are married.

Anne Vercors. It must be. Your mother will explain all to you. [*Enter Mara.*]

The Mother. How long shall you stay over there?

Anne Vercors. I do not know. It may be but a short time.

I shall soon be coming back. [*Silence.*]

Voice of a Child [in the distance]. Oriole, oriole! all alone!

Who eats the wild cherry and throws out the stone!

Anne Vercors. The oriole, rosy and golden, whistles in the heart of the tree.

What does he say? that after these long days of heat
The rain last night was like a shower of gold falling upon the earth.
What does he say? he says it is good weather for ploughing.
What more does he say? that the weather is fine, that God is great, and that it is still two hours of noon.
What more does the little bird say?
That it is time for the old man to go
Elsewhere, and leave the world to itself.
—Jacques, I leave to you all my property,—protect these women.

Jacques Hury. What, are you really going?

Anne Vercors. I believe he has heard nothing.

Jacques Hury. Like that, right away?

Anne Vercors. The hour is come.

The Mother. You will not go without first eating?

[*During this time the women servants have prepared the table for the farm meal.*]

Anne Vercors [*to a woman servant*]. Ho! my bag, my hat!

Bring my shoes! bring my cloak!

I have not time enough to share this meal with you.

The Mother. Anne! How long wilt thou stay over there? One year, two years? More than two years?

Anne Vercors. One year. Two years. Yes, that is it.

Put on my shoes.

[THE MOTHER *kneels before him and puts on his shoes.*]

For the first time I leave thee, O house!

Combernon, lofty dwelling!

Watch faithfully over it all! Jacques will be here in my stead.

There is the hearth where there is always fire, there is the long table where I give food to my people.

All take your places! Just once more I will cut the bread. . . .

[*He seats himself at the head of the long table, with* THE MOTHER *at his right. All the men and women servants stand, each at his place. He takes the bread, making the sign of the cross above it with the knife, and cuts it; and gives it to* VIOLAINE *and* MARA *to pass. The last piece he keeps himself. Then he turns solemnly toward* THE MOTHER *and opens his arms.*]

Farewell, Elisabeth!

The Mother [*weeping in his arms*]. Thou wilt never see me more.

Anne Vercors [*in a lower tone*]. Farewell, Elisabeth.

[*He turns toward* MARA, *looks gravely at her for a long time, and then holds out his hand to her.*]

Farewell, Mara! be virtuous.

Mara [*kissing his hand*]. Farewell, father!

[*Silence.* ANNE VERCORS *stands, looking before him as if he did not see* VIOLAINE, *who stands full of agitation at his side. At last he turns slightly toward her, and she puts her arms around his neck, sobbing, with her face against his breast.*]

Anne Vercors [*to the men servants, as if he noticed nothing*]. Farewell, all!

I have always dealt justly by you. If any one denies this, he lies.

I am not like other masters. But I praise when praise is due, and I reprove when reproof is due.

Now that I am going away, do your duty as if I were there.

For I shall return. I shall return some time when you do not expect me.

[*He shakes hands with them all.*]

Let my horse be brought!

[*Silence. He leans toward* VIOLAINE, *who continues to embrace him.*]

What is it, little child?

You have exchanged a husband for thy father.

Violaine. Alas! Father! Alas!

[*He removes her hands gently from around his neck.*]

The Mother. Tell me when will you return.

Anne Vercors. I cannot tell.

Perhaps it will be in the morning, perhaps at mid-day, when you are eating.

And perhaps, awaking some night, you will hear my step on the road.

Farewell! [*He goes.*]

ACT TWO

SCENE ONE

A fortnight later. The beginning of July. Noon.

A large orchard planted with regular rows of round trees. Higher, and a little withdrawn, the wall and towers and long buildings with tiled roofs of Combernon. Then, the side of the hill, which rises abruptly, and on its summit the massive stone arch of Monsanvierge, without door or window, with its five towers like those of the Cathedral of Laon, and in its side the great white scar made for the recent entrance of the Queen Mother of France.

Everything vibrates under an ardent sun.

[*A woman's voice on high, from the height of the highest tower of Monsanvierge.*]

SALVE REGINA MATER MISERICORDIÆ
VITA DULCEDO ET SPES NOSTRA SALVE
AD TE CLAMAMUS EXULES FILII HEVÆ
AD TE SUSPIRAMUS GEMENTES ET FLENTES IN HAC LACRYMARUM VALLE

EIA ERGO ADVOCATA NOSTRA ILLOS TUOS MISERICORDES OCULOS AD NOS CONVERTE
ET JESUM BENEDICTUM FRUCTUM VENTRIS TUI NOBIS POST HOC EXILIUM OSTENDE
O CLEMENS
O PIA
O DULCIS VIRGO MARIA

[*Long pause during which the stage remains empty.*]

[*Enter* THE MOTHER *and* MARA.]

Mara. What did she say?

The Mother. I drew her out as we talked, without seeming to. You see how she has lost her gay spirits these last few days.

Mara. She never talks much.

The Mother. But she does not laugh any more.

That troubles me.

Perhaps it is because Jacquin is away, but he returns to-day.

—And her father too is gone.

Mara. That is all thou saidst to her?

The Mother. That is what I said to her, and the rest of it without changing a word, just as you said it to me: Jacquin and you: that you love him and all.

And I added, and I said it over two or three times, that this time she must not be foolish, and not resist at all,

Or break off the marriage, which is as good as made, against the father's will.

What would people think of it?

Mara. And what did she answer?

The Mother. She began to laugh, and I, I began to cry.

Mara. I will make her laugh!

The Mother. It was not the laughter I love of my little girl, and I began to cry.

And I said, "No, no, Violaine, my child!" not knowing any longer what I said.

But she, without speaking, made a sign with her hand that she wanted to be alone.

Ah! what misery we have with our children!

Mara. Hush!

The Mother. What is it?

I am sorry for what I have done.

Mara. Well! Do you see her down there in the paddock? She is walking behind the trees.

Now she is out of sight.

[*Silence. From behind the scene is heard the blast of a horn.*]

The Mother. There is Jacquin come back. I know the sound of his horn.

Mara. Let us go further off.

[*They move off.*]

SCENE TWO

[*Enter* JACQUES HURY.]

Jacques Hury [*looking all around*]. I don't see her.

And yet she sent word

That she wanted to see me this morning,

Here.

[*Enter* MARA. *She advances to* JACQUES, *and at six paces before him drops a ceremonious courtesy.*]

Jacques Hury. Good morning, Mara.

Mara. My lord, your servant!

Jacques Hury. What is this foolery?

Mara. Do I not owe you respect? Are you not the master here, dependent only upon God, like the King of France himself and the Emperor Charlemagne?

Jacques Hury. Jest if you like, but it is true all the same! Yes, Mara, it is glorious! Dear sister, I am too happy!

Mara. I am not your *dear* sister! I am your servant because I must be.

Man of Braine! son of a serf! I am not your sister; you are not of our blood!

Jacques Hury. I am the husband of Violaine.

Mara. You are not that yet.

Jacques Hury. I shall be to-morrow.

Mara. Who knows?

Jacques Hury. Mara, I have thought deeply about it,

And I believe you have only dreamed that story you told me the other day.

Mara. What story?

Jacques Hury. Don't pretend not to know.

That story about the mason, that secret kiss at dawn.

Mara. It is possible. I did not see well. Yet I have good eyes.

Jacques Hury. And it has been whispered to me that the man is a leper!

Mara. I do not love you, Jacques.

But you have the right to know all. All must be pure and clear at Monsanvierge, which is held up like a monstrance before all the kingdom.

Jacques Hury. All that will be explained in a moment.

Mara. You are clever and nothing can escape you.

Jacques Hury. I see at any rate that you don't love me.

Mara. There! there! What did I say? what did I say?

Jacques Hury. Everybody here is not of your mind.

Mara. You speak of Violaine? I blush for that little girl.

It is shameful to give oneself like that,

Soul, body, heart, skin, the outside, the inside, and the root.

Jacques Hury. I know that she belongs entirely to me.

Mara. Yes.

How grandly he speaks! how sure he is of the things that belong to him! Brainard of Braine!

Only those things belong to one that one has made, or taken, or earned.

Jacques Hury. But, Mara, I like you, and I have nothing against you.

Mara. Without doubt—like all the rest of the things here?

Jacques Hury. It is no fault of mine that you are not a man, and that I take your property from you!

Mara. How proud and satisfied he is! Look at him, he can hardly keep from laughing!

There now! don't do yourself harm! Laugh! [*He laughs.*]

I know your face well, Jacques.

Jacques Hury. You are angry because you cannot make me unhappy.

Mara. Like the other day while the father was talking,

When one of your eyes smiled and the other wept—without tears.

Jacques Hury. Am I not master of a fine estate?

Mara. And the father was old, wasn't he? You know a thing or two more than he does?

Jacques Hury. To each man his day.

Mara. That is true, Jacques, you are a tall and handsome young man.

See him, how he blushes.

Jacques Hury. Don't torment me.

Mara. All the same, it is a pity!

Jacques Hury. What is a pity?

Mara. Farewell, husband of Violaine! Farewell, master of Monsanvierge—ah—ah!

Jacques Hury. I will show you that so I am.

Mara. Then understand the spirit of this place, Brainard of Braine!

He thinks that everything is his, like a peasant; you will be shown the contrary!

Like a peasant who sees nothing higher than himself as he stands in the midst of his flat little field!

But Monsanvierge belongs to God, and the master of Monsanvierge is God's man, who has nothing

For himself, having received everything for another.

That is the lesson passed on here from father to son. There is no higher position than ours.

Take on the spirit of your masters, peasant! [*She makes as if to go and turns back.*]

Ah!

Violaine, when I met her,

Gave me a message for you.

Jacques Hury. Why did you not say so sooner?

Mara. She is waiting for you near the fountain.

Scene Three

The fountain of the Adoue. It is a large square orifice cut in a vertical wall, built of blocks of limestone. A thin stream of water drips from it with a melancholy sound. Thank-offerings of crosses made of straw and bouquets of faded flowers are hung on the wall.

The fountain is surrounded with luxurious trees, and with a bower of rose-bushes whose abundant blossoms thickly star the green foliage.

Jacques Hury [*he looks at* Violaine *who comes along the winding path. She is all golden, and glows brilliantly at moments when the sun falls upon her between the leaves*]. O my betrothed among the flowery branches, hail!

[Violaine *enters and stands before him. She is clothed in a linen gown with a kind of dalmatic of cloth-of-gold decorated with large red and blue flowers. Her head is crowned with a diadem of enamel and gold.*]

Violaine, how beautiful you are!

Violaine. Jacques! Good morning, Jacques! Ah, how long you stayed down there!

Jacques Hury. I had to get rid of every-

thing, and sell, in order to be perfectly free.
To be the man of Monsanvierge only and yours.
—What is this wonderful dress?
Violaine. I wore it for you. I had spoken to you about it. Do you not recognize it?
It is the habit of the nuns of Monsanvierge, except only the maniple, the habit they wear in the choir,
The deacon's dalmatic which they have the privilege of wearing, something priestly, as they themselves are holy sacrifices,
And the women of Combernon have the right to wear it twice:
First, on the day of their betrothal,
Secondly, on the day of their death.
Jacques Hury. It is really true, then, that this is the day of our betrothal, Violaine?
Violaine. Jacques, there is yet time, we are not married yet!
If you have only wanted to please my father there is still time to withdraw; it concerns no one but us. Say but a word, and I would not want you any more, Jacques.
For nothing has yet been put in writing, and I do not know if I still please you.
Jacques Hury. How beautiful you are, Violaine!
And how beautiful is the world of which you are the portion reserved for me.
Violaine. It is you, Jacques, who are all that is best in the world.
Jacques Hury. Is it true that you are willing to belong to me?
Violaine. Yes, it is true! good morning, my beloved! I am yours.
Jacques Hury. Good morning, my wife! Good morning, sweet Violaine!
Violaine. These are good things to hear, Jacques!
Jacques Hury. You must always be there! Tell me that you will always be the same, the angel who is sent to me!
Violaine. For evermore all that is mine shall always be yours.
Jacques Hury. And as for me, Violaine. . . .
Violaine. Say nothing. I ask you nothing. You are there, and that is enough for me. Good morning, Jacques!
Ah, how beautiful this hour is, and I ask for nothing more.
Jacques Hury. To-morrow will be still more beautiful!
Violaine. To-morrow I shall have taken off my gorgeous robe.
Jacques Hury. But you will be so near to me that I shall no longer be able to see you.
Violaine. Very near to you indeed!
Jacques Hury. Your place is ready.
Violaine, what a solitary spot this is, and how secretly I am here with you!
Violaine [*in a low tone*]. Your heart is enough.
Go to, I am with you, and say not a word more.
Jacques Hury. But to-morrow, before everybody,
I will take this Queen in my arms.
Violaine. Take her, and do not let her go.
Ah, take your little one with you so that they can never find her, and never do her any harm!
Jacques Hury. And you will not regret then the linen and the gold?
Violaine. Was I wrong to make myself beautiful for one poor little hour?
Jacques Hury. No, my beautiful lily, I can never tire of looking at you in your glory!
Violaine. O Jacques! tell me again that you think me beautiful!
Jacques Hury. Yes, Violaine!
Violaine. The most beautiful of all, and the other women are nothing to you?
Jacques Hury. Yes, Violaine.
Violaine. And that you love me only, as the tenderest husband loves the poor creature who has given herself to him?
Jacques Hury. Yes, Violaine.
Violaine. Who gives herself to him with all her heart, Jacques, believe me, and holds nothing back.
Jacques Hury. And you, Violaine, do you not believe me then?
Violaine. I believe you, I believe you, Jacques!
I believe in you! I have confidence in you, my darling!
Jacques Hury. Why, then, do you seem troubled and frightened?
Show me your left hand. [*She shows it.*]
My ring is gone.
Violaine. I will explain that to you presently, you will be satisfied.
Jacques Hury. I am satisfied, Violaine. I have faith in you.

Violaine. I am more than a ring, Jacques. I am a great treasure.

Jacques Hury. Yes, Violaine.

Violaine. Ah, if I give myself to you,

Will you not know how to save your little one who loves you?

Jacques Hury. There you are doubting me again.

Violaine. Jacques! After all I do no harm in loving you. It is God's will, and my father's.

It is you who have charge of me! And who knows if you will not know perfectly how to defend and save me?

It is enough that I give myself entirely to you.

The rest is your affair, and no longer mine.

Jacques Hury. And is it like this you give yourself to me, my flower-o'-the-sun?

Violaine. Yes, Jacques.

Jacques Hury. Who then can take you out of my arms?

Violaine. Ah, how big the world is, and how alone we are!

Jacques Hury. Poor child! I know that your father is gone.

And I too no longer have anyone with me to tell me what should be done, and what is good or ill.

You must help me, Violaine, as I love you.

Violaine. My father has abandoned me.

Jacques Hury. But I remain to you, Violaine.

Violaine. Neither my mother nor my sister love me, though I have done them no wrong.

And nothing is left to me but this tall, terrible man whom I do not know.

[*He tries to take her in his arms. She pushes him away quickly.*]

Do not touch me, Jacques!

Jacques Hury. Am I then a leper?

Violaine. Jacques, I want to speak to you—ah, but it is hard!

Do not fail me, who now have only you!

Jacques Hury. Who would do you harm?

Violaine. Know what you do in taking me for your wife!

Let me speak to you very humbly, my lord Jacques,

Who are about to receive my soul and my body from the hands of God according to his command, and my father's who made them.

And know the dowry I bring to you which is not like those of other women,

But this holy mountain wrapped in prayer day and night before God, like an altar smoking always,

And this lamb whose light is never suffered to go out, and whose oil it is our duty to replenish.

And no man is witness to our marriage, but that Lord whose fief we alone hold,

Who is the Omnipotent, the God of the Armies.

And it is not the sun of July that lights us, but the light of his countenance.

To the holy be the holy things! Who knows if our heart be pure?

Never until now has a male been lacking to our race, and always the sacred place has been handed down from father to son,

And behold, for the first time it falls into the hands of a woman, and becomes with her the object of desire.

Jacques Hury. Violaine—no: I am not a scholar nor a monk nor a saint.

I am not the lay-servant of Monsanvierge, nor the keeper of its turning-box.

I have a duty and I will perform it,

Which is to feed these murmuring birds,

And to fill each morning the basket they lower from the sky.

That is written down. That is right.

I have understood that, and I have fixed it in my head, and you must not ask any more of me.

You must not ask me to understand what is above me, and why these holy women have imprisoned themselves up there in that pigeon-house.

To the heavenly be heaven, and the earth to the earthly.

For the wheat will not grow by itself, and a good ploughman is necessary.

And I can say without boasting that such I am, and no one can teach me that, not even your father himself perhaps,

For he was old and set in his ways.

To each one his own place, and that is justice.

And your father, in giving you to me,

Together with Monsanvierge, knew what he was doing, and that was just.

Violaine. But Jacques, I do not love you because it is just.

And even if it were not just, I would love you the same, and more.

Jacques Hury. I do not understand you, Violaine.

Violaine. Jacques, do not make me speak!

You love me so much, and I can only do you harm.
Let me alone! there cannot be justice between us two! but only faith and charity. Go away from me while there is yet time.

Jacques Hury. I do not understand, Violaine.

Violaine. My beloved, do not force me to tell you my great secret.

Jacques Hury. A great secret, Violaine?

Violaine. So great that all is over, and you will not ask to marry me any more.

Jacques Hury. I do not understand you.

Violaine. Am I not beautiful enough just now, Jacques? What more do you ask of me?

What does one ask of a flower
Except to be beautiful and fragrant for a moment, poor flower, and then—the end.
The flower's life is short, but the joy it has given for a minute
Is not of those things which have a beginning and an end.
Am I not beautiful enough? Is something lacking? Ah! I see thine eyes, my beloved! Is there anything in thee at this moment that does not love me, and that doubts me?
Is my soul not enough? Take it, and I am still here, and absorb to its depths that which is all thine!
To die requires but a moment, and to die in each other would not annihilate us more than love, and does one need to live when one is dead?
What more wouldst thou do with me? Fly, take thyself away! Why dost thou wish to marry me? Why dost thou wish
To take for thyself what belongs only to God?
The hand of God is upon us, and thou canst not defend me!
O Jacques, we shall never be husband and wife in this world!

Jacques Hury. Violaine, what are these strange words, so tender, so bitter? By what threatening and gloomy paths are you leading me?

I believe you wish to put me to the proof, and to triumph over me, who am but a simple and rough man.
Ah! Violaine, how beautiful you are like this! and yet I am afraid, and I see you in clothing that terrifies me!
For this is not a woman's dress, but the robe of one who offers the sacrifice at the altar,
Of him who waits upon the priest, leaving the side uncovered and the arms free!
Ah, I see, it is the spirit of Monsanvierge which lives in you, the supreme flower outside of this sealed garden!
Ah, do not turn to me that face which is no longer of this world! that is no longer my dear Violaine.
There are enough angels to serve the mass in heaven!
Have pity on me, who am only a man without wings, who rejoiced in this companion God had given me, and that I should hear her sigh with her head resting on my shoulder!
Sweet bird! the sky is beautiful, but it is beautiful too to be taken captive!
And the sky is beautiful! but this is a beautiful thing too, and even worthy of God, the heart of a man that can be filled, leaving no part empty.
Do not torment me by depriving me of your face!
And no doubt I am a dull and ugly man,
But I love you, my angel, my queen, my darling!

Violaine. So I have warned you in vain, and you want to take me for your wife, and you will not give up your plan?

Jacques Hury. Yes, Violaine.

Violaine. When a man takes a woman for his wife they are then one soul in one body, and nothing will ever separate them.

Jacques Hury. Yes, Violaine.

Violaine. You wish it!

Then it is not right that I should reserve anything, or keep to myself any longer
This great, this unspeakable secret.

Jacques Hury. Again this secret, Violaine?

Violaine. So great, truly, Jacques,
That your heart will be saturated with it,
And you will ask nothing more of me,
And that we shall never be torn apart from each other.
A secret so deep
That neither life, Jacques, nor hell, nor Heaven itself
Will ever end it, or will ever end this
Moment in which I have revealed it, here in the burning
Heat of this terrible sun which almost prevents us from seeing each other!

Jacques Hury. Speak, then!

Violaine. But tell me first once more that you love me.

Jacques Hury. I love you!

Violaine. And that I am your wife and your only love?

Jacques Hury. My wife, my only love.

Violaine. Tell me, Jacques: neither my face nor my soul has sufficed thee, and that is not enough?

And have you been misled by my proud words? Then learn of the fire which consumes me!

Know this flesh which you have loved so much!

Come nearer to me. [*He comes nearer.*]

Nearer! nearer still! close against my side. Sit down on that bench. [*Silence.*]

And give me your knife.

[*He gives her his knife. She cuts the linen of her gown, at her side upon the heart, under the left breast, and leaning towards him she opens the slit with her hands and shows him the flesh where the first spot of leprosy has appeared. Silence.*]

Jacques Hury [*slightly turning away his face*]. Give me the knife.

[*She gives it to him. Silence. Then Jacques moves a few steps away from her, half turning his back, and he does not look at her again until the end of the Act.*]

Jacques Hury. Violaine, I am not mistaken?

What is this silver flower emblazoned on your flesh?

Violaine. You are not mistaken.

Jacques Hury. It is the malady? it is the malady, Violaine?

Violaine. Yes, Jacques.

Jacques Hury. Leprosy!

Violaine. Surely you are hard to convince.

And you had to see it to believe.

Jacques Hury. And which leprosy is the most hideous,

That of the soul or that of the body?

Violaine. I cannot say as to the other. I only know that of the body, which is bad enough.

Jacques Hury. No, you know not the other, reprobate?

Violaine. I am not a reprobate.

Jacques Hury. Infamous woman, reprobate,

Infamous in your soul and in your flesh!

Violaine. So you do not ask any more to marry me, Jacques?

Jacques Hury. Scoff no more, child of the devil!

Violaine. Such is that great love you had for me.

Jacques Hury. Such is this lily that I had chosen.

Violaine. Such is the man who takes the place of my father.

Jacques Hury. Such is the angel that God had sent me.

Violaine. Ah, who will tear us apart from each other? I love you, Jacques, and you will defend me, and I know that in thy arms I have nothing to fear.

Jacques Hury. Do not mock thyself with these horrible words!

Violaine. Tell me,

Have I broken my word? My soul was not enough for thee? Have you enough now of my flesh?

Will you forget henceforth your Violaine, and the heart she revealed to thee?

Jacques Hury. Go farther away from me!

Violaine. Go to, I am far enough away, Jacques; you have nothing to fear.

Jacques Hury. Yes, yes.

Further than you were from that measled pig of yours!

That maker of bones whereon the flesh rots!

Violaine. Is it of Pierre de Craon that you speak?

Jacques Hury. It is of him I speak, him you kissed on the mouth.

Violaine. And who has told you that?

Jacques Hury. Mara saw you with her own eyes.

And she has told me all, as it was her duty to do,

And I, fool that I was, did not believe it!

Come, confess it! confess it then! It is true! Say that it is true!

Violaine. It is true, Jacques.

Mara always speaks the truth.

Jacques Hury. And it is true that you kissed him on the face?

Violaine. It is true.

Jacques Hury. O damned one! are the flames of hell so savory that you have thus lusted after them while you were still alive?

Violaine [*speaking very low*]. No, not damned.

But sweet, sweet Violaine! sweet, sweet Violaine!

Jacques Hury. And you do not deny that this man had you and possessed you?
Violaine. I deny nothing, Jacques.
Jacques Hury. But I love you still, Violaine!
Ah, this is too cruel!
Tell me something, even if you have nothing to say, and I will believe it! Speak, I beg you! tell me it is not true!
Violaine. I cannot turn all black in a minute, Jacques; but in a few months, a few months more,
You will not recognize me any longer.
Jacques Hury. Tell me that all this is not true.
Violaine. Mara always speaks the truth, and then there is that flower upon my body that you have seen.
Jacques Hury. Farewell, Violaine.
Violaine. Farewell, Jacques.
Jacques Hury. Tell me, what shall you do, wretched woman?
Violaine. Take off this robe. Leave this house.
Fulfill the law. Show myself to the priest.
Go to . . .
Jacques Hury. Well?
Violaine. . . . the place set apart for people like me.
The lazar-house of the Géyn, over there.
Jacques Hury. When?
Violaine. To-day—this very evening.
[*Long silence.*]
There is nothing else to be done.
Jacques Hury. We must avoid any scandal.
Go, take off your robe and put on a travelling dress, and I will tell you what it is right to do. [*They go out.*]

Scene Four

The kitchen at Combernon, as in Act I

The Mother. Every day the weather is fine.
It has not rained for eight days. [*She listens.*]
Now and then I hear the bells of Arcy.
Dong! Dong!
How warm it is, and how large everything looks!
What is Violaine doing? and Jacques? What have they to talk about so long?
I am sorry for what I said to her. [*She sighs.*]
And what is the crazy old man doing? Where is he now?
Ah! [*She bows her head.*]
Mara [*entering quickly*]. They are coming here. I think the marriage is broken off. Do you hear me?
Be silent,
And say nothing.
The Mother. What?
O wicked girl! wretch! You have got what you wished for!
Mara. Let it alone. It is only for a moment.
There was no other way
It could be done. So, now it is I
He must marry and not she. It will be better for her like that. It must be thus. Do you hear?
Be silent!
The Mother. Who told you that?
Mara. Was there need for me to be told? I saw it all in their faces.
I came upon them all warm. I understood everything in no time at all.
And Jacques, poor fellow, I pity him.
The Mother. I am sorry for what I said!
Mara. You have said nothing; you know nothing—be silent!
And if they say anything to you, no matter what they tell you,
Agree with them, do everything they wish. There is nothing more to do.
The Mother. I hope all is for the best.

Scene Five

[*Enter* Jacques Hury, *then* Violaine *all in black, dressed as for a journey.*]

The Mother. What is the matter, Jacques? What is the matter, Violaine?
Why have you put on this dress, as if you were going away?
Violaine. I, too, am going away.
The Mother. Going away? You going away, too? Jacques! what has happened between you?
Jacques Hury. Nothing has happened.
But you know that I went to see my mother at Braine, and have only just returned.
The Mother. Well?
Jacques Hury. You know, she is old and feeble.
She says she wishes to see and bless
Her daughter-in-law before she dies.
The Mother. Can she not come to the wedding?
Jacques Hury. She is ill, she cannot wait.
And this harvest time, too, when there is so much to be done

Is not the time to be married.
We have just been talking about it, Violaine and I, just now, very pleasantly,
And we have decided that it is best to wait till
The autumn.
Until then she will stay at Braine with my mother.

The Mother. Is this your wish, Violaine?

Violaine. Yes, mother.

The Mother. But what! Do you wish to go away this very day?

Violaine. This very evening.

Jacques Hury. I shall go with her.

Time is short and work pressing in this month of hay and harvest. I have already stayed away too long.

The Mother. Stay, Violaine! Do not go away from us, thou too!

Violaine. It is only for a short time, mother!

The Mother. A short time, you promise?

Jacques Hury. A short time, and when autumn comes
Here she will be with us again, never to go away any more.

The Mother. Ah, Jacques! Why do you let her go away?

Jacques Hury. Do you think it is not hard for me?

Mara. Mother, what they both say is reasonable.

The Mother. It is hard to see my child leave me.

Violaine. Do not be sad, mother!
What does it matter that we should wait a few days?
It is only a little time to pass.
Am I not sure of your affection? and of Mara's? and of Jacques', my betrothed?
Is it not so, Jacques? He is mine as I am his, and nothing can separate us? Look at me, dear Jacques. See how he weeps to see me go away!
This is not the time for weeping, mother! am I not young and beautiful and loved by everybody?
My father has gone away, it is true, but he has left me the tenderest of husbands, the friend who will never forsake me.
So it is not the time to weep, but to rejoice.
Ah, dear mother, how beautiful life is, and how happy I am!

Mara. And you, Jacques, what do you say? You do not look very happy.

Jacques Hury. Is it not natural that I should be sad?

Mara. Come! it is only a separation for a few months!

Jacques Hury. Too long for my heart.

Mara. Listen, Violaine, how well he said that!
And how is this, my sister, you so sad too? Smile at me with that charming mouth! Raise those blue eyes that our father loved so much. See Jacques! Look at your wife and see how beautiful she is when she smiles!
She will not be taken away from you! who would be sad who has a little sun like this to shine in his home?
Love her well for us, cruel man! Tell her to be brave!

Jacques Hury. Courage, Violaine!
You have not lost me; we are not lost to each other!
You see that I do not doubt your love; but do you doubt mine?
Do I doubt you, Violaine? Do I not love you, Violaine? Am I not sure of you,
Violaine?
I have talked about you to my mother, and you may imagine how happy she will be to see you.
It is hard to leave the house of your parents.
But where you are going you will have a safe shelter where no one can break in.
Neither your love nor your innocence, dear Violaine, has anything to fear.

The Mother. These are very loving words,
And yet there is something in them, and in what you said to me, my child,
I don't know what—something strange which does not please me.

Mara. I see nothing strange, mother.

The Mother. Violaine! If I hurt you just now, my child,
Forget what I said.

Violaine. You have not hurt me.

The Mother. Then let me embrace you.
(*She opens her arms to her.*)

Violaine. No, mother.

The Mother. What?

Violaine. No.

Mara. Violaine, that is wrong! Do you fear to have us touch thee? Why do you treat us thus, like lepers?

Violaine. I have made a vow.

Mara. What vow?

Violaine. That nobody shall touch me.

Mara. Until you return here?

[*Silence. She lowers her head.*]

Jacques Hury. Let her alone. You see she is troubled.

The Mother. Go away for a moment.

[*They move away.*]

Farewell, Violaine!

You will not deceive me, my child; you will not deceive the mother who bore thee.

What I have said to you is hard; but look at me, I am full of trouble, and I am old.

You—you are young, and you will forget.

My man is gone, and now here is my child turning away from me.

One's own sorrow is nothing, but the sorrow one has caused to others

Makes bitter the bread in the mouth.

Think of that, my sacrificed lamb, and say to yourself: Thus I have caused sorrow to no one.

I counselled thee as I thought for the best. Don't bear malice, Violaine! Save your sister. Must she be left to be ruined?

And God will be with you, who is your recompense.

That is all. You will never see my old face again. May God be with thee!

And you do not wish to kiss me, but I can at least give you my blessing, sweet, sweet Violaine!

Violaine. Yes, mother! yes, mother!

[*She kneels, and* The Mother *makes the sign of the cross above her.*]

Jacques [*returning*]. Come, Violaine, it is time to go.

Mara. Go and pray for us.

Violaine [*calling*]. I give you my dresses, Mara, and all my things!

Have no fear of them; you know that I have not touched them.

I did not go into that room.

—Ah, ah! my poor wedding-dress that was so pretty!

[*She stretches out her arms as if to find support. All remain at a distance from her. She goes out tottering, followed by* Jacques.]

ACT THREE

Scene One

Chevoche. A large forest sparsely grown with lofty oaks and birches, with an undergrowth of pines, firs, and a few holly trees. A wide straight road has just been cut through the woods to the horizon. Workmen are removing the last stumps of trees and preparing the roadway. There is a camp at one side, with huts made of faggots, a pot over a camp-fire, etc. The camp lies in a sand-pit, where a few workmen are engaged in loading a cart with a fine white sand. An apprentice of Pierre de Craon, *squatting among the dry gorse bushes, oversees the work. On either side of the new road stand two colossi made of faggots, with collars and smocks of white cloth, each with a red cross on its breast. A barrel forms the head of each colossus, with its edge cut into saw-teeth to simulate a crown, and a sort of face roughly painted on it in red. A long trumpet is fitted to the bunghole, and held in place by a board as if by an arm.*

It is the end of the day. There is snow on the ground and in the sky.

It is Christmas Eve.

The Mayor of Chevoche. There. Now the King can come.

A Workman. 'A can coom an' a' likes. We've done our part well.

The Mayor (*looking around with satisfaction*). It's mighty beautiful! Fact is, it can hold everybody, as many as there are, men, women, and tiny children.

And to think 'twas the worst part, with all these bad weeds and these briars, and the marsh.

It ain't the wise ones of Bruyères can teach us anything.

A Workman. Their road has a beard, and teeth too, wi' all those stumps they's left us! [*They laugh.*]

The Apprentice [*pedantically, in a voice frightfully sharp and shrill*]. Vox clamantis in deserto: Parate vias Domini et erunt prava in directa et aspera in vias planas.

It is true you have done your work well. I congratulate you, good people. It is like the road at Corpus Christi.

[*Pointing to the Giants.*]

And who, gentlemen, are these two beautiful and reverend persons?

A Workman. Beant they handsome? It was fathe' Vincent, the old drunkard, thet made 'em.

'A said it's th' great King of Abyssinia an' his wife Bellotte.

The Apprentice. For my part I thought they were Gog and Magog.

The Mayor. 'Tis the two Angels of Chevoche who come to salute the King their lord.

They'll be set a-fire when 'a passes.

Listen! [*All listen.*]

A Workman. Oh, no, that beant him yet. We'd hear the bells o' Bruyères a-ringin'.

Another. 'A won't be here afore midnight. 'A supped at Fisme.

Another. 'Tis a good place to see from, here.

I shallna budge.

Another. Hast 'a eat, Perrot? I've on'y a mossel o' bread, all froze.

The Mayor. Don't be afraid. The's a quarter o' pork in the pot and some big sausages, and the roebuck we killed,

And three ells o' blood-sausages, and apples, and a good little keg of Marne wine.

The Apprentice. I stay with you.

A Woman. And there's a good little Christmas for you.

The Apprentice. It was on Christmas Day that King Clovis was baptized at Rheims.

Another Woman. 'Tis Christmas Day that oor King Charles comes back to get hi'-self crowned.

Another. 'Tis a village girl, sent by God,

Who brings him back to his own.

Another. Jeanne, they call her!

Another. The Maid!

Another. Who was born on Twelfth Night!

Another. Who drove the English away from Orleans when they besieged it!

Another Workman. And who's goin' to drive 'em out of France too, all of 'em! Amen.

Another Workman [*humming*]. Noel! Cock-a-doodle-do! Noel! Noel come again! Rrr! how cauld it be!

[*He wraps himself closer in his cloak.*]

A Woman. Mus' look well t' see if the's a little man all in red clothes by th' King. That's her.

Another Woman. On a tall black horse.

The First Woman. On'y six months agone her was keepin' her father's cows.

Another Woman. And now her carries a banner where Jesus is in writin'.

A Workman. An' that the English run away before like mice.

Another Workman. Let the wicked Bourguignons o' Saponay beware!

Another Workman. They'll all be at Rheims at the break o' day.

Another Workman. What be they doin', those down there?

The Apprentice. The two bells of the Cathedral, Baudon and Baude, will be rung at the Gloria at midnight, and they will never stop swinging and clanging until the French come.

Everybody will keep a lighted candle in his house until morning.

They expect the King to be there for the Mass at dawn, which is "Lux fulgebit."

All the clergy will go out to meet him, three hundred priests and the Archbishop in copes of gold, and the monks, the Mayor and the vestry.

All that will be very beautiful on the snow, in the bright merry sunshine, with all the people singing "Noel"!

And they say that the King intends to get down from his horse, and enter his good city riding upon an ass, like our Lord.

The Mayor. How comes it that you did not stay down there?

The Apprentice. Master Pierre de Craon sent me here to get sand.

The Mayor. What! He busies himself about sand at such a time?

The Apprentice. He says there is not much time.

The Mayor. But how could he employ himself better than in making this road, as we do?

The Apprentice. He says that his work is not to make roads for the King, but a dwelling for God.

The Mayor. Of what use would Rheims be if the King could not reach it?

The Apprentice. But what use would the road be if there is no church at the end of it?

The Mayor. He is not a good Frenchman.

The Apprentice. He says that he knows nothing but his work. If anybody talks politics to us, we blacken his nose with the bottom of the frying-pan.

The Mayor. He has not even been able to finish his Justice, though 'tis ten years they've been working on it.

The Apprentice. On the contrary! All the stone is polished, and the woodwork is in place; it's only the spire that has not yet done growing.

The Mayor. They never work on it.

The Apprentice. The master is preparing

the glass for his windows now, and that is why he sends us here for sand;
Though that is not his craft.
All winter he has worked among his furnaces.
To make light, my poor people, is more difficult than to make gold,
To breathe on this heavy matter and make it transparent, "according as our bodies of mud shall be changed into bodies of glory,"
As Saint Paul said.
And he says that he must find for each colour
The mother-colour itself, just as God himself made it.
That is why, into his great clean vessels, full of shining water, he pours jacinth, ultramarine, rich gold, vermilion,
And he watches these beautiful rose-coloured liquids to see what happens to them in the sunshine, and by virtue of the grace of God, and how they mingle and bloom in the matrass.
And he says there is not one colour which he cannot make out of his own knowledge alone,
As his body makes red and blue.
Because he wishes the Justice of Rheims to shine like the morning on the day of her nuptials.

The Mayor. They say he has leprosy.

The Apprentice. That is not true! I saw him naked last summer.
While he bathed in the Aisne at Soissons. I know what I say!
His flesh is as healthy as a child's.

The Mayor. It is queer, all the same. Why did he keep himself hidden so long?

The Apprentice. That is a lie.

The Mayor. I know, I am older than you. You mustn't get angry, little man. It doesn't matter if he be sick in the body.
It isn't with his body he works.

The Apprentice. Better not let him hear you say that! I remember how he punished one of us because he stayed all the time in his corner, drawing:
He sent him up on the scaffolding to serve the masons all day and pass them their hods and their stones,
Saying that by the end of the day he would know two things better than he could learn them by rule and design: the weight a man can carry and the height of his body.
And as the grace of God multiplies each of our good deeds,
So he taught us about what he calls "the shekel of the Temple," and this dwelling of God of which each man who does all that his body is capable of doing is like a secret foundation;
What means the thumb, and the hand, and the arm's length, and the spread of both our arms, and the arm extended, and the circle it makes,
And the foot and the step;
And how all these things are never the same.
Do you think Father Noah was indifferent to the body when he built the ark? and are these things of no account:
The number of paces from the door to the altar, and the height the eye may be lifted to, and the number of souls the two sides of the Church may hold all at the same time?
For the heathen artist made everything from the outside, but we make all from within, like the bees,
And as the soul does for the body: nothing is lifeless, everything lives,
Everything gives thanks in action.

The Mayor. The little man talks well.

A Workman. Hear him, like a magpie, all full of his master's words.

The Apprentice. Speak with respect of Pierre de Craon!

The Mayor. 'Tis true he's a burgher of Rheims, and they call him Master of the Compass.
As they used to call Messire Loys
The Master of the Rule.

Another. Throw some wood on the fire,
Perrot. Look, it's beginning to snow.

[*It snows. Night has come. Enter* MARA *dressed in black, carrying a bundle under her cloak.*]

Mara. Are these the people of Chevoche?

The Mayor. 'Tis ourselves.

Mara. Praised be Jesus Christ.

The Mayor. Amen!

Mara. Is it around here I'll find the little cell of the Gévn?

The Mayor. Where the leper woman lives?

Mara. Yes.

The Mayor. Not exactly here, but close by.

Another. You want to see the leper woman?

Mara. Yes.

A Man. She can't be seen; she always wears a veil over her face, as it's ordered.

Another. And well ordered! it isn't myself as wants to see her.

Mara. It's a long time you've had her?

A Man. A'most eight years, and we'd like it well not to have her at all.

Mara. Is that because she has done harm?

A Man. No, but all t'same it's unlucky to have these varmint kind of folk near by.

The Mayor. And then, 'tis the parish that feeds her.

A Man. By the way, I bet they've forgot to take her her bite to eat for three days, with all these doings about the road!

A Woman. And what do you want o' this woman?

[Mara *makes no reply, but stands, looking at the fire.*]

A Woman. A person would say it's a child you're a-holdin' in your arms?

Another Woman. It's a fearsome cold to take out little children at such an hour.

Mara. It is not cold.

[*Silence. There is heard from the darkness under the trees, the sound of a wooden rattle.*]

An Old Woman. Wait! there's her! there's her click-click! Holy Virgin! what a pity her ain't dead!

A Woman. 'A comes to ask for her food. No fear her'll forget that!

A Man. What a plague 'tis to feed such varmint.

Another. Toss her somethin'. She mustn't come anigh to us. First thing you know she'd give us the poison.

Another. No meat, Perrot! It's fast day, it's Christmas Eve! [*They laugh.*]

Throw her this mossel o' bread that's froze. Good enough for the like o' her!

A Man [*calling*]. Heigh, No-face! Heigh, Jeanne, I say, hallo, rotting one!

[*The black form of the leper woman is seen on the snow.* Mara *looks at her.*]

Catch it!

[*He throws her swiftly a piece of bread. She stoops and picks it up and goes away.* Mara *follows her.*]

A Man. Where is it she's going?

Another. Here, woman! hallo! where be you going, what be you doing?

[Mara *and* The Woman *go farther away.*]

Scene Two

They disappear within the forest, leaving their tracks upon the snow. The night brightens. The brilliant moon, surrounded by an immense halo, lights up a hillock covered with heather and white sand. Enormous sandstone rocks, fantastically formed, rise here and there like beasts belonging to the fossil ages, like inexplicable monuments or idols with deformed heads and limbs. And the leper woman conducts Mara *to the cave where she lives, a kind of low cavern in which it is impossible to stand upright. The back of the cave is closed, leaving only an opening for the smoke.*

Scene Three

Violaine. Who is this
That does not fear to walk with the leper woman?
You must know that it is dangerous to be near her, and her breath is deadly.

Mara. It is I, Violaine.

Violaine. O voice, so long unheard! Is it you, mother?

Mara. It is I, Violaine.

Violaine. It is your voice and another.
Let me light this fire, for it is very cold. And this torch, too.

[*She lights a fire of turf and heather by means of live embers which she takes from a pot, and then the torch.*]

Mara. It is I, Violaine; Mara, your sister.

Violaine. Dear sister, hail! How good of you to come! But do you not fear me?

Mara. I fear nothing in this world.

Violaine. How much your voice has become like *Maman's!*

Mara. Violaine, our dear mother is no more. [*Silence.*]

Violaine. When did she die?

Mara. In that same month after your departure.

Violaine. Knowing nothing?

Mara. I do not know.

Violaine. Poor *Maman!*
May God have thy soul in his keeping!

Mara. And our father has not yet come back.

Violaine. And you two?

Mara. It is well with us.

Violaine. Everything at home is as you wish it?

Mara. Everything is well.

Violaine. I know it could not be otherwise
With Jacques and you.
Mara. You should see what we have done!
We have three more ploughs.
You would not recognize Combernon.
And we are going to pull down those old walls,
Now that the King has come back.
Violaine. And are you happy together, Mara?
Mara. Yes. We are happy. He loves me
As I love him.
Violaine. God be praised.
Mara. Violaine!
You do not see what I hold in my arms?
Violaine. I cannot see.
Mara. Lift your veil, then.
Violaine. Under that I have another.
Mara. You cannot see any more?
Violaine. I have no longer any eyes.
The soul lives alone in the ruined body.
Mara. Blind!
How then are you able to walk so straight?
Violaine. I hear.
Mara. What do you hear?
Violaine. I hear all things exist with me.
Mara [*significantly*]. And I, Violaine, do you hear me?
Violaine. God has given me the same intelligence
Which He has given to us all.
Mara. Do you hear me, Violaine?
Violaine. Ah, poor Mara!
Mara. Do you hear me, Violaine?
Violaine. What would you have of me, dear sister?
Mara. To join you in praise of this God who has struck you with the pestilence.
Violaine. Then let us praise Him, on this Eve of His Nativity.
Mara. It is easy to be a saint when leprosy helps us.
Violaine. I do not know, not being one.
Mara. We must turn to God when everything else is gone.
Violaine. He at least will not fail us.
Mara [*softly*]. Perhaps, who knows? Violaine, tell me!
Violaine. Life fails, but not the death where I now live.
Mara. Heretic! are you sure, then, of your salvation?
Violaine. I am sure of the goodness of Him who has provided for everything.
Mara. We see His first instalment.
Violaine. I have faith in God who has ordained my destiny.
Mara. What do you know of Him who is invisible, who is never manifest?
Violaine. He is not more invisible to me now than all the rest.
Mara [*ironically*]. He is with you, little dove, and He loves you!
Violaine. As with all who are wretched, Himself with me.
Mara. Surely how very great is His love!
Violaine. As the love of the fire for the wood it flames above.
Mara. He has cruelly punished you.
Violaine. Not more that it was due to me.
Mara. And already, he to whom you had submitted your body has forgotten you?
Violaine. I have not submitted my body!
Mara. Sweet Violaine! lying Violaine! Did I not see you tenderly kiss Pierre de Craon the morning of that beautiful day in June?
Violaine. You saw all, and there was nothing else.
Mara. Why, then, did you kiss him so feelingly?
Violaine. The poor man was a leper, and I, I was so happy that day!
Mara. In all innocence, wasn't it?
Violaine. Like a little girl who kisses a poor little boy.
Mara. Ought I to believe that, Violaine?
Violaine. It is true.
Mara. Don't say, too, that it was of your own will you abandoned Jacques to me?
Violaine. No, not of my own will. I loved him! I am not so good as that.
Mara. Ought he to have loved you the same, though you were a leper?
Violaine. I did not expect it.
Mara. Who would love a leper woman?
Violaine. My heart is pure!
Mara. But what did Jacques know of that? He believes you guilty.
Violaine. Our mother had told me that you loved him.
Mara. Don't say it was she who made you a leper.
Violaine. God in His goodness warned me.
Mara. So that when our mother spoke to you . . .
Violaine. It was His voice that I heard.
Mara. But why allow yourself to seem guilty?

Violaine. Should I have done nothing, then, on my part?
Poor Jacquin! Was it necessary to leave him still regretting me?
Mara. Say that you did not love him at all.
Violaine. I did not love him, Mara.
Mara. But I would never have let him go like that.
Violaine. Was it I who let him go?
Mara. It would have killed me.
Violaine. And am I living?
Mara. Now I am happy with him.
Violaine. Peace be unto you!
Mara. And I have given him a child, Violaine! a dear little girl. A sweet little girl.
Violaine. Peace be unto you!
Mara. Our happiness is great. But yours is greater, with God.
Violaine. And I too knew what happiness was eight years ago, and my heart was ravished with it.
So much, that I madly asked God—ah!—that it might last for ever!
And God heard me in a strange manner! Will my leprosy ever be cured? No, no, as long as there remains a particle of my flesh to be devoured.
Will the love in my heart be cured? Never, as long as my immortal soul lives to nourish it.
Does your husband understand you, Mara?
Mara. What man understands a woman?
Violaine. Happy is she who can be known, heart and soul, who can give herself utterly.
Jacques—what would he have done with all that I could have given him?
Mara. You have transferred your faith to Another?
Violaine. Love has ended in pain, and pain has ended in love.
The wood we set on fire gives not only ashes, but a flame as well.
Mara. But of what use is this blind fire that gives to others
Neither light nor heat?
Violaine. Is it not something that it does me service?
Do not begrudge to a creature consumed,
Afflicted to the uttermost depths, this light that illumines her within!
And if you could pass but one night only in my skin, you would not say that this fire gives no heat.
Man is the priest, but it is not forbidden to woman to be victim.
God is miserly, and does not permit any creature to be set on fire
Unless some impurity be burned with him,
His own, or that which surrounds him, as when the living embers in the censer are stirred.
And truly these are unhappy times.
The people have no father. They look around, and they know no longer where the King is, or the Pope.
That is why my body agonizes here for all Christendom which is perishing.
Powerful is suffering when it is as voluntary as sin!
You saw me kiss that leper, Mara?
Ah, the chalice of sorrow is deep,
And who once sets his lip to it can never withdraw it again of his own free will.
Mara. Take my sorrow upon thee, too!
Violaine. I have already taken it.
Mara. Violaine! if there is still something living, that was once my sister, under that veil and in that ruined body,
Remember that we were children together! Have pity upon me!
Violaine. Speak, dear sister. Have faith! Tell me all!
Mara. Violaine, I am a wretched woman, and my pain is greater than yours!
Violaine. Greater, sister?

[MARA, *with a loud cry, opens her cloak and lifts up the corpse of a baby.*]

Look! Take it!
Violaine. What is this?
Mara. Look, I tell you! take it! Take it, I give it to you.

[*She lays the corpse in her arms.*]

Violaine. Ah! I feel a rigid little body! a poor little cold face!
Mara. Ha! ha! Violaine! My child! my little girl!
That is her sweet little face! that is her poor little body!
Violaine [*speaking low*]. Dead, Mara?
Mara. Take her, I give her to you!
Violaine. Peace, Mara!
Mara. They wanted to take her away from me, but I would not let them! and I ran away with her.

But you, take her, Violaine. Here, take her; you see, I give her to you.

Violaine. What do you wish me to do, Mara?

Mara. What do I wish you to do? do you not understand?

I tell you she is dead! I tell you she is dead!

Violaine. Her soul lives with God. She follows the Lamb. She is with all the blessed little girls.

Mara. But for me she is dead!

Violaine. You readily give me her body! give the rest to God.

Mara. No! no! no! You shall never trick me with your nunnish rigmaroles! No, I shall never be silenced.

This milk that burns my breast cries out to God like the blood of Abel!

Have I got fifty children to tear out of my body? have I got fifty souls to tear out of my soul?

Do you know what it is to be rent in two in order to bring into the world this little wailing creature?

And the midwife told me I should have no more children.

But if I had a hundred children it would not be my little Aubaine.

Violaine. Accept, submit.

Mara. Violaine, you know well I have a hard head. I am one who never gives up, and who accepts nothing.

Violaine. Poor sister!

Mara. Violaine, they are so sweet, these little ones, and it hurts you so when this cruel little mouth bites your breast!

Violaine [*caressing the face*]. How cold her little face is!

Mara [*speaking low*]. He knows nothing yet.

Violaine [*also speaking low*]. He was not home?

Mara. He has gone to Rheims to sell his grain.

She died suddenly, in two hours.

Violaine. Whom was she like?

Mara. Like him, Violaine. She is not only mine, she is his, too. Only her eyes are like mine.

Violaine. Poor Jacquin!

Mara. It was not to hear you say poor Jacquin! that I came here.

Violaine. What do you wish of me, then?

Mara. Violaine, do you want to know?

Tell me, do you know what a soul is that damns itself,

Of its own will, to all eternity?

Do you know what it is in the heart that really blasphemes?

There is a devil who, while I was running, sang me a little song,

Do you wish to hear the things he taught me?

Violaine. Do not say these horrible things!

Mara. Then give me back my child that I gave you.

Violaine. You gave me only a corpse.

Mara. And you, give it back to me alive!

Violaine. Mara, what do you dare to say?

Mara. I will not have it that my child is dead.

Violaine. Is it in my power to bring the dead to life?

Mara. I don't know, I have only you to help me.

Violaine. Is it in my power to bring the dead to life, like God?

Mara. Of what use are you, then?

Violaine. To suffer and to supplicate!

Mara. But of what use is it to suffer and supplicate if you give me not back my child?

Violaine. God knows. It is enough for Him that I serve Him.

Mara. But I—I am deaf, and I do not hear! and I cry to you from the depths where I am fallen!

Violaine! Violaine!

Give me back that child I gave you! See! I give in, I humiliate myself! have pity on me!

Have pity on me, Violaine, and give me back that child you took from me.

Violaine. Only He who took it can give it back!

Mara. Give it back to me then! Ah, I know it is all your fault.

Violaine. My fault!

Mara. Then let it not be yours.

It is mine, forgive me!

But give her back to me, my sister!

Violaine. But you see it is dead.

Mara. You lie! it is not dead! Ah! figure-of-tow, ah, heart-of-a-sheep! Ah, if I had access to your God as you have,

He would not take my little ones away from me so easily!

Violaine. Ask me to re-create heaven and earth!

Mara. But it is written that you may blow on that mountain and cast it into the sea.

Violaine. I can, if I am a saint.

Mara. You must be a saint when a wretched being prays to you.

Violaine. Ah, supreme temptation!
I swear, and I declare, and I protest before God that I am not a saint!

Mara. Then give me back my child.

Violaine. O my God, you see into my heart.
I swear, and I declare, and I protest before God that I am not a saint!

Mara. Violaine, give me back my child!

Violaine. Why will you not leave me in peace?
Why do you come thus to torment me in my tomb?
Am I of any worth? do I influence God? am I like God?
It is God himself you are asking me to judge.

Mara. I ask you only for my child.

[*Pause.*]

Violaine [*raising her finger.*] Listen.

[*Silence. A distant, almost imperceptible, sound of bells.*]

Mara. I hear nothing.

Violaine. The Christmas bells, the bells announcing the midnight Mass!
O Mara, a little child is born to us!

Mara. Then give me back mine.

[*Trumpets in the distance.*]

Violaine. What is that?

Mara. It is the King going to Rheims. Have you not heard of the road the peasants have cut through the forest?
And they can keep all the wood they cut.
It is a little shepherdess who guides the King through the middle of France
To Rheims, to be crowned there.

Violaine. Praised be God, who does all these wonderful things!

[*Again the sound of bells, very distinct.*]

Mara. How loud the bells ring for the *Gloria!*
The wind blows this way.
They are ringing in three villages all at once.

Violaine. Let us pray, with all the universe!
Thou art not cold, Mara?

Mara. I am cold only in my heart.

Violaine. Let us pray. It is long since we celebrated Christmas together.
Fear nothing. I have taken your grief upon myself. Look! and that which you have given me lies close against my heart.
Do not weep! This is not the time to weep, when the salvation of all mankind is already born.

[*Bells in the distance, less clear.*]

Mara. The snow has stopped, and the stars are shining.

Violaine. Look! Do you see this Book?
The priest who visits me now and then left it with me.

Mara. I see it.

Violaine. Take it, will you? and read me the Christmas Service, the First Lesson of each of the three Nocturnes.

[Mara *takes the Book and reads.*]

PROPHECY OF ISAIAH

1 Nevertheless, the dimness shall not be such as was in her vexation, when at the first he lightly afflicted the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, and afterward did more grievously afflict her by the way of the sea, beyond Jordan, in Galilee of the nations.
2 The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light: they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined.
3 Thou has multiplied the nation, and not increased the joy: they joy before thee according to the joy in harvest, and as men rejoice when they divide the spoil.
4 For thou hast broken the yoke of his burden; and the staff of his shoulder, the rod of his oppressor, as in the day of Midian.
5 For every battle of the warrior is with confused noise, and garments rolled in blood; but this shall be with burning and fuel of fire.
6 For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given, and the government shall be upon his shoulder; and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace.

Violaine [*raising her face*]. Listen!

[*Silence.*]

Voices of Angels in heaven, heard only by Violaine:

Choir.[1] HODIE NOBIS DE CÆLO PAX VERA

[1] Isaiah ix, 1–6.

[1] The voices are like those of heroic young men ringing solemnly in unison, with retarded movement and very simple cadence at the end of phrases.

DESCENDIT, HODIE PER TOTUM MUNDUM MELLIFLUI FACTI SUNT CÆLI.

A Voice.[1] HODIE ILLUXIT NOBIS DIES REDEMPTIONIS NOVÆ, REPARATIONIS ANTIQUÆ, FELICITATIS ÆTERNÆ.

Choir. HODIE PER TOTUM MUNDUM MELLIFLUI FACTI SUNT CÆLI.

[VIOLAINE *lifts her finger in warning. Silence.* MARA *listens and looks uneasily.*]

Mara. I hear nothing.

Violaine. Read on, Mara.

Mara [*continuing to read*].

SERMON OF SAINT LEO, POPE

Our Saviour, dearly beloved, was to-day born: let us rejoice. For there should be no loop-hole open to sorrow on the birthday of Life, which, the fear of Death being at last consumed, filleth us with the joy of eternity promised. No one from this gladness is excluded, as one and the same cause for happiness exists for us all: for Our Lord, the destroyer of sin and Death, having found no one exempt from sin, came to deliver every one. Let the sinless exult insomuch as his palm is at hand; let the sinful rejoice . . .

[*Suddenly a brilliant and prolonged sound of trumpets very near. Shouts resound through the forest.*]

Mara. The King! The King of France!

[*Again and again the blare of the trumpets, unutterably piercing, solemn, and triumphant.*]

Mara [*in a low voice*]. The King of France who goes to Rheims! [*Silence.*]

Violaine! [*Silence.*]

Do you hear me, Violaine?

[*Silence. She goes on with the reading.*]

. . . Let the sinful rejoice insomuch as forgiveness is offered to him. Let the Gentile be of good cheer, because he is bidden to share life. For the Son of God, according to the fulness of this time which the inscrutable depth of the Divine counsel hath disposed, took on Himself the nature of mankind so that He might reconcile it to its maker, and that this deviser of Death, Satan, by that which he had vanquished might be in his turn conquered.

[1] Like the voice of a child.

Voices of Angels [*heard only by* VIOLAINE, *as before*].

Choir. O MAGNUM MYSTERIUM ET ADMIRABILE SACRAMENTUM UT ANIMALIA VIDERINT DOMINUM NATUM JACENTEM IN PRÆSEPIO! BEATA VIRGO CUJUS VISCERA MERUERUNT PORTARE DOMINUM CHRISTUM.

A Voice. AVE, MARIA, GRATIA PLENA, DOMINUS TECUM.

Choir. BEATA VIRGO CUJUS VISCERA MERUERUNT PORTARE DOMINUM CHRISTUM.

[*Pause.*]

Mara. Violaine, I am not worthy to read this Book! Violaine, I know that my heart is too hard, and I am sorry for it: I wish I could be different.

Violaine. Read on, Mara. You do not know who chants the responses.

[*Silence.*]

Mara [*with an effort takes up the Book, and reads in a trembling voice*].

The Holy Gospel according to Saint Luke.[2]

[*They both stand up.*]

1 And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Cæsar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed. [*And the rest.*]

[*They sit down.*]

HOMILY OF SAINT GREGORY, POPE

[*She stops, overcome by emotion.—The trumpets sound a last time in the distance.*]

Forasmuch as, by the grace of God, we are this day thrice to celebrate the solemnities of Mass, we may not speak at length on the gospel that hath just been read. However, the birth of our Redeemer bids us address you at least in a few words. Wherefore, at the time of this birth, should there have been a census of all the people except clearly to manifest that He who was appearing in the flesh just then was numbering his Elect for eternity? On the contrary, the Prophet saith of the wicked: they shall be deleted from the Book of the Living and they shall not be written down among the Righteous. It is meet also that He should be born in Bethlehem. For Bethlehem means the House of Bread, and Jesus Christ saith of Himself: I am the Living Bread descended from Heaven.

[2] Luke ii, 1.

Therefore had the place in which our Lord was born been called the House of Bread in order that He who was to feed our hearts with internal satiety should there appear in the substance of flesh. He was born, not in the house of his parents, but by the roadside, no doubt to show that by taking on humanity He was being born in a place strange to Him.

Voices of Angels.

Choir. BEATA VISCERA MARIÆ VIRGINIS QUÆ PORTAVERUNT ÆTERNI PATRIS FILIUM; ET BEATA UBERA QUÆ LACTAVERUNT CHRISTUM DOMINUM.

QUI HODIE PRO SALUTE MUNDI DE VIRGINE NASCI DIGNATUS EST.

A Voice. DIES SANCTIFICATUS ILLUXIT NOBIS; VENITE, GENTES, ET ADORATE DOMINUM.

Choir. QUI HODIE PRO SALUTE MUNDI DE VIRGINE NASCI DIGNATUS EST.

[*Long silence.*]

Voices of Angels [*again, almost imperceptible*].

Choir. VERBUM CARO FACTUM EST ET HABITAVIT IN NOBIS: ET VIDIMUS GLORIAM EJUS, GLORIAM QUASI UNIGENITI A PATRE, PLENUM GRATLÆ ET VERITATIS.

A Voice. OMNIA PER IPSUM FACTA SUNT ET SINE IPSO FACTUM EST NIHIL.

Choir. ET VIDIMUS GLORIAM EJUS, GLORIAM QUASI UNIGENITI A PATRE, PLENUM GRATIÆ ET VERITATIS.

A Voice. GLORIA PATRI ET FILIO ET SPIRITUI SANCTO.

Choir. ET VIDIMUS GLORIAM EJUS, GLORIAM QUASI UNIGENITI A PATRE, PLENUM GRATIÆ ET VERITATIS. [*Long silence.*]

Violaine [*suddenly cries out in a stifled voice*]. Ah!

Mara. What is it?

[*With her hand* VIOLAINE *makes a sign to be silent.—Silence.—The first flush of dawn appears.*]

[VIOLAINE *puts her hand under her cloak as if to fasten her dress again.*]

Mara. Violaine, I see something moving under your cloak!

Violaine [*as if she were awakening little by little*]. Is it you, Mara? good morning, sister. I feel the breath of the new-born day on my face.

Mara. Violaine! Violaine! is it your arm that stirs? Again I see something moving.

Violaine. Peace, Mara, it is Christmas Day, when all joy is born!

Mara. What joy is there for me unless my child lives?

Violaine. And for us, too—a little child is born to us!

Mara. In the name of the living God, what say you?

Violaine. "Behold, I bring thee glad tidings . . ."

Mara. Your cloak—it moves again!

[*The little bare foot of a baby, moving lazily, appears in the opening of the cloak.*]

Violaine. ". . . Because a man has appeared in the world!"

[MARA *falls upon her knees, with a deep sigh, her forehead on the knees of her sister.* VIOLAINE *caresses her.*]

Violaine. Poor sister! she weeps. She, too, has had too much sorrow.

[*Silence.* VIOLAINE *kisses her head.*]

Take it, Mara! Would you leave the child always with me?

Mara [*she takes the child from under the cloak and looks at it wildly*]. It lives!

Violaine [*she walks out of the cave a few steps upon the heather. By the first light of the bitter cold morning can be seen, first, the pine and birch trees hoary with frost, then, at the end of an immense snow-covered plain, seeming very small on the top of its hill, but clearly etched in the pure air, the five-towered silhouette of Monsanvierge*]. Glory to God!

Mara. It lives!

Violaine. Peace on earth to men!

Mara. It lives! it lives!

Violaine. It lives and we live.

And the face of the Father appeared on the earth born again and comforted.

Mara. My child lives!

Violaine [*raising her finger*]. Listen!

[*Silence.*]

I hear the Angelus ringing at Monsanvierge.

[*She crosses herself and prays. The child awakes.*]

Mara [*whispering*]. It is I, Aubaine; dost know me?

[*The child moves about and whines.*]

What is it, my joy? What is it, my treasure?

[*The child opens its eyes, looks at its mother and begins to cry.* MARA *looks closely at it.*]

Violaine!
What does this mean? Its eyes were black,
And now they are blue like yours.
[*Silence.*]
Ah!
And what is this drop of milk I see on its lips?

ACT FOUR

Scene One

Night. The large kitchen, as in Act I, empty. A lamp is on the table. The outer door is half open.

Mara *enters from without, and carefully closes the door. She stands still for a moment in the centre of the room, looking toward the door, and listening.*

Then she takes the lamp and goes out by another door without making any sound.

The stage remains dark. Nothing can be seen but the fire of some live coals on the hearth.

Scene Two

Two or three blasts of a horn are heard in the distance. Sounds of calling. Movement in the farm. Then the noise of opening doors, and the grinding of approaching cart-wheels. Loud knocks at the door.

Voice from Without [*calling.*] Hallo!
[*Noise in the upper story of a window opening.*]
Voice of Jacques Hury. Who is there?
Voice from Without. Open the door!
Voice of Jacques Hury. What do you want?
Voice from Without. Open the door!
Voice of Jacques Hury. Who are you?
Voice from Without. Open the door so that I can tell you! [*Pause.*]
[Jacques Hury, *with a candle in his hand, enters the room; he opens the door. After a slight pause, enter* Pierre de Craon, *carrying the body of a woman wrapped up in his arms. He lays his burden very carefully upon the table. Then he lifts his head. The two men stare at each other in the candlelight.*]
Pierre de Craon. Jacques Hury, do you not recognize me?
Jacques Hury. Pierre de Craon?
Pierre de Craon. It is I.
[*They continue to look at each other.*]
Jacques Hury. And what is this you bring me?
Pierre de Craon. I found her half-buried in my sand-pit, there where I seek what I need
For my glass ovens, and for the mortar—
Half-hidden under a great cart-load of sand, under a cart standing on end from which they had taken off the backboard.
She is still alive. It is I who took it upon myself to bring her to you
Here.
Jacques Hury. Why here?
Pierre de Craon. That at least she might die under her father's roof!
Jacques Hury. There is no roof here but mine.
Pierre de Craon. Jacques, here is Violaine.
Jacques Hury. I know no Violaine.
Pierre de Craon. Have you never heard of the Leper Woman of Chevoche?
Jacques Hury. What does that matter to me?
You lepers, it is for you to scrape each other's sores.
Pierre de Craon. I am not a leper any more;
I was cured long ago.
Jacques Hury. Cured?
Pierre de Craon. Year after year the disease grew less, and I am now healthy.
Jacques Hury. And this one, she too will be cured presently.
Pierre de Craon. You are more leprous than she and I.
Jacques Hury. But I don't ask to be taken out of my hole in the sand.
Pierre de Craon. And even if she had been guilty, you ought to remember.
Jacques Hury. Is it true that she kissed you on the mouth?
Pierre Craon [*looking at him*]. It is true, poor child!
Jacques Hury. She moves, she is coming to herself.
Pierre de Craon. I leave you with her.
[*He goes out.*]

Scene Three

[Jacques Hury *sits down near the table and looks silently at* Violaine.]
Violaine [*coming to herself and stretching forth her hand*]. Where am I, and who is there?
Jacques Hury. At Monsanvierge, and it is I who am near you. [*Pause.*]

Violaine [*speaking as she used to do*]. Good morning, Jacques. [*Silence.*]
Jacques, you still care for me, then?

Jacques Hury. The wound is not healed.

Violaine. Poor boy!
And I, too, have I not suffered a little too?

Jacques Hury. What possessed you to kiss that leper on the mouth!

Violaine. Jacques! you must reproach me quickly with all you have in your heart against me, that we may finish with all that.
For we have other things still to say.
And I want to hear you say just once again those words I loved so much: *Dear Violaine! Sweet Violaine!*
For the time that remains to us is short.

Jacques Hury. I have nothing more to say to you.

Violaine. Come here, cruel man!
[*He approaches her, where she lies.*]
Come nearer to me.
[*She takes his hand and draws him to her. He kneels awkwardly at her side.*]
Jacques, you must believe me. I swear it before God, who is looking upon us!
I was never guilty with Pierre de Craon.

Jacques Hury. Why, then, did you kiss him?

Violaine. Ah, he was so sad and I was so happy.

Jacques Hury. I don't believe you.
[*She lays her hand a moment on his head.*]

Violaine. Do you believe me now?
[*He hides his face in her dress and sobs heavily.*]

Jacques Hury. Ah, Violaine! cruel Violaine!

Violaine. Not cruel, but sweet, sweet Violaine!

Jacques Hury. It is true, then? yes, it was only I you loved?
[*Silence. She gives him her other hand.*]

Violaine. Jacques, no doubt it was all too beautiful, and we should have been too happy.

Jacques Hury. You have cruelly deceived me.

Violaine. Deceived? this silver flower on my side did not lie.

Jacques Hury. What was I to believe, Violaine?

Violaine. If you had believed in me,
Who knows but what you might have cured me?

Jacques Hury. Was I not to believe my own eyes?

Violaine. That is true. You ought to have believed your own eyes, that is right.
One does not marry a leper. One does not marry an unfaithful woman.
Do not regret anything, Jacques. There, it is better as it is.

Jacques Hury. Did you know that Mara loved me?

Violaine. I knew it. My mother herself had told me.

Jacques Hury. Thus everything was in league with her against me!

Violaine. Jacques, there is already enough sorrow in the world.
It is best not to be willingly the cause of a great sorrow to others.

Jacques Hury. But what of my sorrow?

Violaine. That is another thing, Jacques. Are you not happy to be with me?

Jacques. Yes, Violaine.

Violaine. Where I am, there is patience, not sorrow. [*Silence.*]
The world's grief is great.
It is too hard to suffer, and not to know why.
But that which others do not know, I have learned, and thou must share my knowledge.
Jacques, have we not been separated long enough now? should we let any barrier remain between us? Must it still be that death shall separate us?
Only that which is ill should perish, and that which should not perish is that which suffers.
Happy is he who suffers, and who knows why.
Now my task is finished.

Jacques Hury. And mine begins.

Violaine. What! do you find the cup where I have drunk so bitter?

Jacques Hury. And now I have lost you for ever!

Violaine. Tell me, why lost?

Jacques Hury. You are dying.

Violaine. Jacques, you must understand me!
Of what use is the finest perfume in a sealed vase? it serves for nothing.

Jacques Hury. No, Violaine.

Violaine. Of what use has my body been to me, having hidden away my heart so

that you could not see it, but you saw only the scar on the outside of the worthless shell.

Jacques Hury. I was hard and blind!

Violaine. Now I am broken utterly, and the perfume is set free.

And behold, you believe everything, simply because I laid my hand on your head.

Jacques Hury. I believe. I do not doubt any more.

Violaine. And tell me, where is the Justice in all that, this justice you spoke of so proudly?

Jacques Hury. I am no longer proud.

Violaine. Come, leave Justice alone. It is not for us to call her and to make her come.

Jacques Hury. Violaine, how you have suffered in these eight long years!

Violaine. But not in vain. Many things are consumed in the flame of a heart that burns.

Jacques Hury. Deliverance is near.

Violaine. Blessed be the hand that led me that night!

Jacques Hury. What hand?

Violaine. That silent hand that clasped mine, and led me, when I was coming back with my food.

Jacques Hury. Led you where?

Violaine. Where Pierre de Craon found me.

Under a great mound of sand, a whole cartload heaped upon me. Did I place myself there, all alone?

Jacques Hury (rising). Who has done that?

God's Blood! who has done that?

Violaine. I don't know. It matters little. Do not curse.

Jacques Hury. I shall find out the truth about that.

Violaine. No, you shall find out the truth about nothing.

Jacques Hury. Tell me all!

Violaine. I have told you all. What would you learn of a blind woman?

Jacques Hury. You shall not put me off the track.

Violaine. Do not waste words. I have only a little more time to be with you.

Jacques Hury. I shall always have Mara.

Violaine. She is your wife, and she is my sister, born of the same father and the same mother, and of the same flesh,

Both of us, here beside Monsanvierge.

[*Silence.*]

[Jacques *stands a moment motionless as if trying to control himself. Then he sits down again.*]

Jacques Hury. There are no more recluses at Monsanvierge.

Violaine. What do you say?

Jacques Hury. The last one died last Christmas. No mouth comes any more to the wicket of the nourishing church of this holy monastery, so the priest tells us who used to give them communion.

Violaine. The mountain of God

Is dead, and we share the heritage, Mara and I.

Jacques Hury. And Violaine was the secret offshoot of the Holy Tree, growing from some subterranean root.

God would not have taken her from me, if she had been entirely filled by me, leaving no part of her empty,

"God's part," as good women call it.

Violaine. What's to be done? so much the worse!

Jacques Hury. Stay! do not go!

Violaine. I stay, I am not going.

Tell me, Jacques, do you remember that hour at noon, and that great scorching sun, and that spot on the flesh under my breast that I showed to you?

Jacques Hury. Ah!

Violaine. You remember? did I not tell you truly that you could never more tear me out of your soul?

This of myself is in you for ever. I do not wish you any more to be happy, it is not proper that you should laugh,

In this time when you are still far away from me.

Jacques Hury. Ah! Ah! Violaine!

Violaine. Have this from me, my well-beloved!

The communion on the cross, the bitterness like the bitterness of myrrh,

Of the sick man who sees the shadow upon the dial, and of the soul that receives its call!

And for you age is already come. But how hard it is to renounce when the heart is young!

Jacques Hury. And from me you have not wanted to accept anything!

Violaine. Think you that I know nothing about you, Jacques?

Jacques Hury. My mother knew me

Violaine. To me also, O Jacques, you have caused much pain!

Jacques Hury. You are a virgin and I have no part in you.

Violaine. What! must I tell you everything?

Jacques Hury. What do you still conceal?

Violaine. It is necessary. This is not the time to keep anything back.

Jacques Hury. Speak louder.

Violaine. Have they not told you, then, that your child was dead?

Last year, while you were at Rheims?

Jacques Hury. Several people told me. But Mara swears that it only slept.

And I have never been able to draw from her the whole story.

They say she went to find you.

I should have known everything in time. I wanted to learn the whole truth.

Violaine. That is true. You have the right to know all.

Jacques Hury. What did she go to ask of you?

Violaine. Have you never noticed that the eyes of your little girl are changed?

Jacques Hury. They are blue now, like yours.

Violaine. It was Christmas night. Yes, Jacques, it is true, she was dead. Her little body was stiff and icy.

I know it; all night I held her in my arms.

Jacques Hury. Who then restored her to life?

Violaine. God only, and with God the faith and the despair of her mother.

Jacques Hury. But you had nothing to do with it?

Violaine. O Jacques, to you only I will tell a great mystery.

It is true, when I felt this dead body upon my own, the child of your flesh, Jacques. . . .

Jacques Hury. Ah, my little Aubaine!

Violaine. You love her very much?

Jacques Hury. Go on.

Violaine. . . . My heart contracted, and the iron entered into me.

Behold what I held in my arms for my Christmas night, and all that remained of our race, a dead child!

All of yours that I should ever possess in this life!

And I listened to Mara, who read me the Service for this Holy night: the babe who has been given to us, the gospel of Joy.

Ah, do not say that I know nothing of you!

Do not say that I do not know what it is to suffer for you!

Nor that I do not know the effort and the partition of the woman who gives life!

Jacques Hury. You do not mean that the child was really brought back to life?

Violaine. What I know is that it was dead, and that all of a sudden I felt its head move!

And life burst from me in a flash, at one bound, and my mortified flesh bloomed again!

Ah, I know what it is, that little blind mouth that seeks, and those pitiless teeth!

Jacques Hury. O Violaine!

[*Silence. He makes as if to rise.* VIOLAINE *feebly forces him to remain seated.*]

Violaine. Do you forgive me now?

Jacques Hury. Oh, the duplicity of women!

Ah, you are the daughter of your mother!

Tell me! it is not you that you would have me forgive!

Violaine. Whom, then?

Jacques Hury. What hand was that which took yours the other night, and so kindly led you?

Violaine. I do not know.

Jacques Hury. But I think that I know.

Violaine. You do not know.

Leave that to us, it is an affair between women.

Jacques Hury. My affair is to have justice done.

Violaine. Ah, leave thy Justice alone!

Jacques Hury. I know what remains for me to do.

Violaine. You know nothing at all, poor fellow.

You have no understanding of women,

And what poor creatures they are, stupid and hard-headed and knowing only one thing.

Do not confuse everything between you and her, as with you and me.

Was it really her hand alone? I do not know. And you do not know either. And of what good would it be to know?

Keep what you have. Forgive.

And you, have you never needed to be forgiven?

Jacques Hury. I am alone.

Violaine. Not alone, with this beautiful little child I have given back to you,
And Mara, my sister, your wife, of the same flesh as myself. Who, with me, knows you better?
It is necessary for you to have the strength and the deed, it is necessary for you to have a duty plainly laid down and final.
That is why I have this sand in my hair.

Jacques Hury. Happiness is ended for me.

Violaine. It is ended, what does that matter?
Happiness was never promised to you. Work, that is all that is asked of you.—*And Monsanvierge belongs only to you now.*—
Question the old earth and she will always answer you with bread and wine.
As for me I have finished with her, and I go beyond.
Tell me, what is the day you will pass far from me? It will soon pass.
And when your turn shall come, and when you see the great door creak and move,
I shall be on the other side and you will find me waiting. [*Silence.*]

Jacques Hury. O my betrothed, through the blossoming branches, hail!

Violaine. You remember?
Jacques! Good morning, Jacques!
[*The first rays of dawn appear.*]
And now I must be carried away from here.

Jacques Hury. Carried away?

Violaine. This is not the place for a leper to die in.
Let me be carried to that shelter my father built for the poor at the door of Monsanvierge.
[*He makes as if to take her. She waves him away with her hand.*]
No, Jacques, no, not you.

Jacques Hury. What, not even this last duty to you?

Violaine. No it is not right that you should touch me.
Call Pierre de Craon.
He has been a leper, though God has cured him. He has no horror of me.
And I know that to him I am like a brother, and woman has no more power over his soul.
[Jacques Hury *goes out and returns several minutes later with* Pierre de Craon. *She does not speak. The two men look at her in silence.*]

Violaine. Jacques!

Jacques Hury. Violaine!

Violaine. Has the year been good and the grain fine and abundant?

Jacques Hury. So abundant that we do not know where to put it all.

Violaine. Ah!
How beautiful a great harvest is!
Yes, even now I remember it, and I think it beautiful.

Jacques Hury. Yes, Violaine.

Violaine. How beautiful it is
To live! [*speaking low and with deep fervour*] and how great is the glory of God!

Jacques Hury. Live, then, and stay with us.

Violaine. But how good it is to die too! When all is really ended, and over us spreads little by little
The darkness, as of a deep shade. [*Silence.*]

Pierre de Craon. She does not speak any more.

Jacques Hury. Take her. Carry her where I have told you.
For, as to me, she does not wish me to touch her.
Very gently! Gently, gently, I tell you. Do not hurt her.
[*They go out,* Pierre *carrying the body. The door stands open. Long pause.*]

Scene Four

On the threshold of the door appears Anne Vercors *in the habit of a traveller, a staff in his hand and a sack slung on his back.*

Anne Vercors. Open?
Is the house empty, that all the doors should be open?
Who has come in so early before me? or who is it that has gone out?
[*He looks around a long time.*]
I recognize the old room, nothing is changed.
Here is the fireplace, here is the table.
Here is the ceiling with its strong beams.
I am like an animal that smells all around him, and who knows his resting-place and his home.
Hail, house! It is I. Here is the master come back.
Hail, Monsanvierge, lofty dwelling!
From far away, since yesterday morning and the day before, on the top of the hill I recognized the Arch with the five towers.

But why is it that the bells ring no more? neither yesterday nor this morning
Have I heard in the sky, with the Angel ninefold sonorous, tidings of Jesus brought three times, three times to the heart of Mary.
Monsanvierge! how often I have thought of thy walls,
While, under my captive feet, I made the water rise into the garden of the old man of Damascus.
(Oh, the morning, and the implacable afternoon!
Oh, the eternal noria and the eyes we lift toward Lebanon!)
And all the aromatic odours of exile are little to me
Compared with this walnut-leaf I crush between my fingers.
Hail, Earth, powerful and subdued! Here it is not sand that we plough, and soft alluvium,
But the deep earth itself that we work with the whole strength of our body and of the six oxen who pull and form slowly under the ploughshare of the great trench,
And, as far as my eyes can see, everything has responded to the upheaval man has caused.
Already I have seen all my fields, and perceived that everything is well cared for. God be praised! Jacques does his work well. [*He lays his sack on the table.*]
Earth, I have been to seek for thee a little earth,
A little earth for my burial, that which God himself chose for his own at Jerusalem.
[*Pause.*]
I would not come back last night. I waited for daylight.
And I passed the night under a stack of new straw, thinking, sleeping, praying, looking around, remembering, giving thanks,
Listening to hear, if I could, the voice of my wife, or of my daughter Violaine, or of a crying child.
When I awoke I saw that the night was brighter.
And up there, above the dark crest of Monsanvierge, resplendent, from Arabia,
The morning star rose over France, like a herald rising in the solitude!
And then I came to the house.
Hallo! Is there anybody here?
[*He raps on the table with his staff. . . . Curtain, which remains down a few minutes.*]

Scene Five

The farther end of the garden. Afternoon of the same day. End of the summer.

The trees are heavy with fruit. The branches of some of them, bending to the ground, are held up by props. The dried and tarnished leaves, mingled with the red and yellow of apples, seem like tapestry.

Below, flooded with light, lies the immense plain as it would be after the harvest; with stubble, and already some ploughed earth. The white roads and the villages can be seen. There are rows of haystacks, looking very small, and here and there a poplar. Far away, in another direction, are flocks of sheep. The shadows of large clouds pass over the plain.

In the middle, where the scene descends toward the background, from which the tops of the trees in a little wood are seen to emerge, there is a semicircular stone bench, reached by three steps, and with lions' heads at each end of its back. Anne Vercors *is sitting there, with* Jacques Hury *at his right side.*

Anne Vercors. The golden end of Autumn
Will soon
Despoil the fruit tree and the vine.
And in the morning the white sun,
A single flash of a fireless diamond, will blend with the white vesture of the earth:
And the evening is near when he who walks beneath the aspen
Shall hear the last leaf on its summit.
Now, behold, making equal the days and nights,
Counterpoising the long hours of labour with its projecting sign, athwart the celestial Door
Interposes the royal Balance.
Jacques Hury. Father, since thou hast been gone,
Everything, the painful story, and the plot of these women, and the pitfall made to take us in,
Thou know'st, and I have told thee
Still another thing, with my mouth against thine ear,
Where is thy wife? where is thy daughter Violaine?
And lo, thou talkest of the straw we twist, and of the great black grape

Which fills the hand of the vine-dresser, the hand he thrusts under the vine-branch!
Already
The crooked Scorpion and the retreating Sagittarius
Have appeared on the dial of night.

Anne Vercors. Let the old man exult in the warm season! O truly blessed place! O bosom of the Fatherland! O grateful, fecund earth!
The carts passing along the road
Leave straw among the fruited branches!

Jacques Hury. O Violaine! O cruel Violaine! desire of my soul, you have betrayed me!
O hateful garden! O love useless and denied! O garden planted in an evil hour!
Sweet Violaine! perfidious Violaine! Oh, the silence and the depth of woman!
Art thou then really gone, my soul?
Having deceived me, she goes away; and having undeceived me, with fatal sweet words,
She goes again, and I, bearing this poisoned arrow, it will be necessary
That I live on and on! like the beast we take by the horn, drawing his head out of the manger,
Like the horse we loose from the single-tree in the evening with a lash of the whip on his back!
O ox, it is thou that walkest ahead, but we two make but one team.
Only that the furrow be made, that is all they ask of us.
That is why everything that was not necessary to my task, everything has been taken away from me.

Anne Vercors. Monsanvierge is dead, and the fruit of your labour is for you alone.

Jacques Hury. It is true. [*Silence.*]

Anne Vercors. Have they looked well to provisioning the chapel for to-morrow?
Is there enough to eat and drink for all those we shall have to entertain?

Jacques Hury. Old man! It is your daughter we are going to lay in the earth, and behold what you find to say!
Surely you have never loved her! But the old man, like the miser who after warming his hands at his pot of embers hoards their heat in his bosom,
He suffices for himself alone.

Anne Vercors. Everything must be done.
Things must be done honourably
. . . Elisabeth, my wife, hidden heart!

[*Enter* Pierre de Craon.]

Anne Vercors. Is everything ready?

Pierre de Craon. They are working at the coffin.
They are digging the grave where you ordered,
Close up by the church there, near that of the last chaplain, your brother.
Within it they have put the earth you brought back.
A great black ivy-vine
Comes out of the priestly tomb, and, crossing the wall,
Enters almost into the sealed arch.
. . . To-morrow, in the early morning. Everything is ready.

[Jacques Hury *weeps, his face in his cloak. In the path is seen a nun, like a woman who hunts for flowers.*]

Anne Vercors. What are you looking for, Sister?

Voice of the Nun [*hollow and smothered*]. Some flowers, to lay on her heart, between her hands.

Anne Vercors. There are no more flowers, there is nothing but fruit.

Jacques Hury. Push aside the leaves and you will find the last violet!
And the Immortelle is still in the bud, and nothing is left to us but the dahlia and the poppy. [*The nun is no longer there.*]

Pierre de Craon. The two Sisters, who care for the sick, one quite young the other very old,
Have dressed her, and Mara has sent her wedding-dress for her.
Truly, she was only a leper, but she was honourable in the sight of God.
She reposes in a deep sleep
As one who knows in whose care she is.
I saw her before they had laid her in the coffin.
Her body is still supple.
Oh, while the Sister finished dressing her, with her arm around her waist,
Holding her in a sitting posture, how her head fell backward
Like that of the still warm partridge the hunter picks in his hand!

Anne Vercors. My child! my little daughter I carried in my arms before she knew how to walk!
The fat little girl who awoke with bursts of laughter in her little sabot of a bed.
All that is over. Ah! ah! O God! Alas!

Pierre de Craon. Don't you want to see her before they nail down the coffin-lid?

Anne Vercors. No. The child disowned Goes away secretly.

Jacques Hury. Never again in this life shall I see her face.

[Pierre de Craon *sits down at the left of* Anne Vercors. *Long pause. The sound of a hammer on planks. They remain silent, listening.* Mara *is seen to pass at the side of the stage holding a child in her arms wrapped in a black shawl. Then she re-enters slowly at the back, and comes and stands in front of the bench where the three men are sitting. They stare at her, except* Jacques Hury, *who looks at the ground.*]

Mara [*her head lowered*]. Hail, father! Hail to you all.

You stare at me and I know what you think: "Violaine is dead.

The beautiful ripe fruit, the good golden fruit

Has fallen from the branch, and, bitter without, hard as a stone within,

Only the wintry nut remains to us." Who loves me? Who has ever loved me?

[*She lifts her head with a savage gesture.*]

Well! here I am! what have you to say to me? Say everything! What have you against me?

What makes you look at me like that, with your eyes saying: It is thou! It is true, it is I!

It is true, it was I who killed her,

It was I the other night who took her by the hand, having gone to seek her,

While Jacques was not there,

And I who made her fall into the sandpit, and who turned over upon her

That loaded cart. Everything was ready, there was only a bolt to pull out,

I did that,

Jacques! and it is I, too, who said to my mother,

Violaine—to talk to her that day when you came back from Braine.

For I longed ardently to marry you, and if I could not I had decided to hang myself the day of your wedding.

Now God, who sees into hearts, had already let her take the leprosy.

—But Jacques never stopped thinking of her.

That is why I killed her.

What then? What else was there to do? What more could be done

So that the one I love and who is mine

Should be mine entirely, as I am his entirely,

And that Violaine should be shut out?

I did what I could.

And you in your turn, answer! Your Violaine that you loved,

How then did you love her, and which was worth the most,

Your love, do you think, or my hatred?

You all loved her! and here is her father who abandons her, and her mother who advises her!

And her betrothed, how he has believed in her!

Certainly you loved her,

As we say we love a gentle animal, a pretty flower, and that was all the feeling there was in your love!

Mine was of another kind;

Blind, never letting go anything once taken, like a deaf thing that does not hear!

For him to have me entirely, it was necessary to me to have him entirely!

What have I done after all that I must defend myself? who has been the most faithful to him, I or Violaine?

Violaine who betrayed him for I know not what leper, giving in, said she, to God's council in a kiss?

I honour God. Let him stay where he is! Our miserable life is so short! Let him leave us in peace!

Is it my fault if I loved Jacques? was it for my happiness, or for the burning away of my soul?

What could I do to defend myself, I who am not beautiful, nor agreeable, a poor woman who can only give pain?

That is why I killed her in my despair!

O poor, unskilful crime!

O disgrace to her that no one loves and with whom nothing succeeds! What ought to have been done, since I loved him and he did not love me?

[*She turns toward* Jacques.]

And you, O Jacques, why do you not speak?

Why turn you your face to the ground, without a word to say,

Like Violaine, the day when you accused her unjustly?

Do you not know me? I am your wife.

Truly I know that I do not seem to you either beautiful or agreeable, but look, I have

dressed myself for you, I have added to that pain that I can give you. And I am the sister of Violaine.

It is born of pain! This love is not born of joy, it is born of pain! the pain which suffices for those who have no joy!

No one is glad to see it, ah, it is not the flower in its season,

But that which is under the flowers that wither, the earth itself, the miserly earth under the grass, the earth that never fails!

Know me then!

I am your wife and you can do nothing to change that!

One inseparable flesh, the contact by the centre and by the soul, and for confirmation this mysterious parentage between us two.

Which is, that I have had a child of yours.

I have committed a great crime, I have killed my sister; but I have not sinned against you. And I tell you that you have nothing to reproach me with. And what do the others matter to me?

That is what I had to say, and now do what you will. [*Silence.*]

Anne Vercors. What she says is true. Go, Jacques, forgive her!

Jacques Hury. Come then, Mara.

[*She comes nearer and stands before them, forming with her child a single object upon which the two men extend together their right hands. Their arms cross, and* JACQUES' *hand is laid on the head of the child, that of* ANNE *on the head of* MARA.]

Jacques Hury. It is Violaine who forgives you.

It is through her, Mara, that I forgive you.

Guilty woman, it is she who reunites us.

Mara. Alas! alas! dead words and without a ray of light!

O Jacques, I am no longer the same! There is something in me that is ended. Have no fear. All that is nothing to me.

Something in me is broken, and I am left without strength, like a woman widowed and without children.

[*The child laughs vaguely and looks all around, with little cries of delight.*]

Anne Vercors [*caressing it*]. Poor Violaine!

And you, little child! How blue its eyes are!

Mara [*melting into tears.*] Father! father! ah!

It was dead, and it was she who brought it back to life!

[*She goes away, and sits down alone. The sun goes down. It rains here and there on the plain, and the lines of the rain can be seen crossing the rays of the sun. An immense rainbow unfurls.*]

Voice of a Child. Hi! Hi! look at the beautiful rainbow!

[*Other voices cease in the distance. Great flocks of pigeons fly about, turning, scattering, and alighting here and there in the stubble.*]

Anne Vercors. The earth is set free. The place is empty.

The harvest is all gathered, and the birds of heaven

Pick up the lost grain.

Pierre de Craon. Summer is over, the season sleeps in a time of quiet, everywhere the foliage rustles in the breeze of September.

The sky has turned blue again, and while the partridges call from their covert,

The buzzard soars in the liquid air.

Jacques Hury. Everything is yours. Father! take back again all this property you vested in me.

Anne Vercors. No, Jacques, I no longer possess anything, and this is no more mine. He who went away will not return, and that which is once given cannot be

Taken back. Here is a new Combernon, a new Monsanvierge.

Pierre de Craon. The other is dead. The virgin mountain is dead, and the scar in her side will never open again.

Anne Vercors. It is dead. My wife, too, is dead, my daughter is dead, the holy Maid

Has been burned and thrown to the winds, not one of her bones remains on the earth.

But the King and the Pope have been given back again to France and to the whole world.

The schism comes to an end, and once more the Throne rises above all men.

I returned by Rome, I kissed the foot of Saint Peter, I ate the consecrated bread stand-

ing with people from the Four Divisions of the Earth,
While the bells of the Quirinal and of the Lateran, and the voice of Santa Maria Maggiore,
Saluted the ambassadors of these new nations who come from the Orient and the Occident all together into the City,
Asia found again, and this Atlantic world beyond the Pillars of Hercules!
And this very evening when the Angelus shall ring, at the same hour when the star Al-Zohar glows in the unfurled heaven,
Begins the year of Jubilee which the new Pope grants,
The annulment of debts, the liberation of prisoners, the suspension of war, the closing of the courts, the restitution of all property.

Pierre de Craon. Truce for one year and peace for one day only.

Anne Vercors. What does it matter? peace is good, but war will find us armed.

O Pierre! this is a time when women and newborn infants teach sages and old men!
Here am I shocked like a Jew because the face of the Church is darkened, and because she totters on her road forsaken by all men.
And I wanted once more to clasp the empty tomb, to put my hand in the hole left by the cross.
But my little daughter Violaine has been wiser.
Is the object of life only to live? will the feet of God's children be fastened to this wretched earth?
It is not to live, but to die, and not to hew the cross, but to mount upon it, and to give all that we have, laughing!
There is joy, there is freedom, there is grace, there is eternal youth! and as God lives, the blood of the old man on the sacrificial cloth, near that of the young man,
Makes a stain as red and fresh as that of the yearling lamb!
O Violaine! child of grace! flesh of my flesh! As far as the smoky fire of my farm is distant from the morning star,
When on the sun's breast that beautiful virgin lays her illumined head,
May thy father see thee on high through all eternity in the place which has been kept for thee!
As God lives, where the little child goes the father should go also!
What is the worth of the world compared to life? and what is the worth of life if not to be given?
And why torment ourselves when it is so simple to obey?
It is thus that Violaine follows at once without hesitation the hand that takes hers.

Pierre de Craon. O father! I was the last who held her in my arms, because she entrusted herself to Pierre de Craon, knowing that there is no longer in his heart the desire of the flesh.

And the young body of this divine brother lay in my arms like a tree that has been cut down and droops
Already, as the glowing colour of the pomegranate blossoms everywhere flames from the bud that can no longer sheathe it,
So the splendour of the angel that knows not death embraces our little sister.
The odour of Paradise exhaled in my arms from this broken tabernacle.
Do not weep, Jacques, my friend.

Anne Vercors. Do not weep, my son.

Jacques Hury. Pierre, give me back that ring she gave thee.

Pierre de Craon. I cannot!

Any more than the ripened spike of corn can give back the seed in the earth from which sprang its stem.
Of that bit of gold I have made a fiery gem.
And the vessel of everlasting Day where the seed of the ultimate goodness of saintly souls is treasured.
Justitia is finished and lacks only the woman that I shall set there at the blossoming of my supreme lily.

Anne Vercors. You are powerful in works, Pierre, and I have seen on my way the churches you have brought to birth.

Pierre de Craon. Blessed be God who has made me a father of churches,

And who has endowed my soul with understanding and the sense of the three dimensions!
And who has debarred me as a leper and freed me from all temporal care,
To the end that I should raise up from the soil of France Ten Wise Virgins whose oil is never exhausted, and who compose a vessel of prayers!
What is this *soul*, or bolt of wood, that the

lutemaker inserts between the front and the back of his instrument,
Compared to this great enclosed lyre, and of these columnar Powers in the night, whose number and distance I have calculated?
Never from the outside do I carve an image.
But, like father Noah, from the middle of my enormous Arch,
I work from within, and see everything rise simultaneously around me!
And what is matter which the hand can chisel compared to the spirit we strive to enshrine,
Or to the hallowed space left empty by a reverent soul shrinking back in the presence of its God?
Nothing is too deep for me: my wells descend as far as the waters of the Mother-spring.
Nothing is too high for the spire that mounts to heaven and steals God's lightning from him!
Pierre de Craon will die, but the Ten Virgins, his daughters,
Will remain like the Widow's cruse
In which the flower and the sacred measures of the oil and wine are renewed for ever.

Anne Vercors. Yes, Pierre. Whoever trusts himself to stone will not be deceived.

Pierre de Craon. Oh, how beautiful is stone, and how soft it is in the hands of the architect! and how right and beautiful a thing is his whole completed work!
How faithful is stone, and how well it preserves the idea, and what shadows it makes!
And if a vine grows well on the least bit of wall, and the rosebush above it blooms,
How beautiful it is, and how true it is altogether!
Have you seen my little church of l'Epine, which is like a glowing brasier and a rosebush in full bloom?
And Saint Jean de Vertus like a handsome young man in the midst of the Craie Champenoise? And Mont-Saint Martin which will be mellow in fifty years?
And Saint-Thomas of Fond-d'Ardenne that you can hear in the evening bellowing like a bull in the midst of its marshes?
But Justitia that I have made last, Justitia my daughter is more beautiful!

Anne Vercors. I shall go there and leave my staff for a thank-offering.

Pierre de Craon. She is dedicated in my heart, nothing is lacking, she is whole.
And for the roof,
I have found the stone I sought, not quarried by iron,
Softer than alabaster and closer-grained than a grindstone.
As the fragile teeth of the little Justitia serve as a foundation for my great structure,
So also at the summit, in the wide sky, I shall set this other Justice,
Violaine the leper in glory, Violaine the blind in the sight of everybody.
And I shall make her with her hands crossed on her breast, like the spike of grain still half-prisoned in its tegmen,
And her eyes blindfolded.

Anne Vercors. Why blindfolded?

Pierre de Craon. That, seeing not, she may the better hear
The sounds of the city and the fields, and man's voice at the same time with the voice of God.
For she is Justice herself, who listens and conceives in her heart the perfect harmony.
This is she who is a refuge from storms, and a shade from the heat at the rising of the dog-star.

Jacques Hury. But Violaine is not a stone for me, and stone does not suffice me!
And I do not wish the light of her beautiful eyes to be veiled!

Anne Vercors. The light of her soul is with us. I have not lost thee, Violaine! How beautiful thou art, my child!
And how beautiful is the bride when on her wedding-day she shows herself to her father in her splendid wedding-gown, sweetly embarrassed.
Walk before me, Violaine, my child, and I will follow thee. But sometimes turn thy face toward me, that I may see thine eyes!
Violaine! Elisabeth! soon again I shall be with you.
As for you, Jacques, perform your task in your turn, as I have done mine! The end is near.
It is here, the end of all that is given me of the day, of the year, and of my own life!
It is six o'clock. The shadow of the Grès-qui-va-boire reaches the brook.
Winter comes, night comes; yet a little more night,
A short watch!

All my life I have worked with the Sun and aided him in his task.
But now, by the fireside, in the light of the lamp,
All alone I must begin the night.

Pierre de Craon. O husbandman, your work is finished. See the empty land, see the harvested earth, and already the plough attacks the stubble!

And now, what you have begun it is my part to complete.
As you have opened the furrow, I dig the pit wherein to preserve the grain, I prepare the tabernacle.
And as it is not you who cause the harvest to ripen, but the sun, so is it also with grace.
And nothing, unless it issue from the seed, can develop into the ear.
And certainly, Justice is beautiful. But how much more beautiful
Is this fruitful tree of mankind, which the seed of the Eucharist engenders and makes grow.
This too makes one complete whole, unified.
Ah, if all men understood architecture as I do,
Who would willingly fail to follow his vocation and renounce the sacred place assigned to him in the Temple?

Anne Vercors. Pierre de Craon, you have many thoughts, but for me this setting sun suffices.

All my life I have done the same thing that he does, cultivating the earth, rising and returning home with him.
And now I go into the night, and I am not afraid, and I know that there too all is clear and in order, in the season of this great heavenly winter which sets all things in motion.
The night sky where everything is at work, and which is like a great ploughing, and a room with only one person in it.
And there the eternal Ploughman drives the seven oxen, with his gaze set upon a fixed star,
As ours is set upon the green branch that marks the end of the furrow.
The sun and I, side by side
Have worked, and the product of our work does not concern us. Mine is done.
I bow to what must be, and now I am willing to be dissolved.
And herein lies peace for him who knows it, and joy and grief in equal parts.
My wife is dead. Violaine is dead. That is right.
I do not desire to hold any more that weak and wrinkled old hand. And as for Violaine, when she was eight years old, when she came and threw herself against my legs,
How I loved that strong little body! And little by little the impetuous, frolicsome roughness of the laughing child
Melted into the tenderness of the maiden, into the pain and heaviness of love, and when I went away
I saw already in her eyes one unknown blossom among the flowers of her springtime.

Pierre de Craon. The call of death, like a solemn lily.

Anne Vercors. Blessed be death in which all the petitions in the Paternoster are satisfied.

Pierre de Craon. For my part, it was by herself and from her innocent lips
That I received freedom and dismissal from this life.

[*The sun is in the western sky, as high as a tall tree.*]

Anne Vercors. Behold the sun in the sky,
As he is in the pictures where the Master awakes the workman at the Eleventh Hour.

[*The door of the barn is heard to creak.*]

Jacques Hury. What is that?

Anne Vercors. They have come to the barn for straw
To lay in the bottom of the grave.

[*Silence:—Sound in the distance of a washer-woman beating linen.*]

Voice of a Child [*without*].

Marguerite of Paris, pray!
Lend to me thy shoes of gray!
To walk in Paradise a way!
How fair it is!
How warm it is!
I hear the little bird say it is!
He goes pa—a—a—a!

Jacques Hury. That is not the door of the barn, it is the sound of the tomb opening!
And, having looked at me with her blind eyes, she that I loved passes to the other side.
And I too, I have looked at her like one who is blind, and I did not doubt without proofs.
I never doubted her who accused her.
I have made my choice, and she that I chose has been given to me. What shall I say? It is right.

It is right.
Happiness is not for me, but desire! it will never be torn from me.
And not Violaine, radiant and unblemished,
But the leper bending over me with a bitter smile and the devouring wound in her side! [*Silence.*]

[*The sun is behind the trees. It shines through the branches. The shadows of the leaves cover the ground and the seated people. Here and there a golden bee shines in the sunny interstices.*]

Anne Vercors. Here am I seated, and from the top of the mountain I see all the country at my feet.
And I recognize the roads, and I count the farms and villages, and I know them by name, and all the people who live in them.
The plain is lost to view toward the north.
And elsewhere, rising again, the hill surrounds this village like a theatre.
And everywhere, all the while,
Green and pink in the spring, blue and flaxen in the summer, brown in winter or all white with snow,
Before me, at my side, around me,
I see always the Earth, like an unchanging sky all painted with changing colours.
Having a form as much its own as a person's, it is always there present with me.
Now that is finished.
How many times have I risen from my bed and gone to my work!
And now here is evening, and the sun brings home the men and the animals as if he led them by his hand.

[*He raises himself slowly and painfully, and slowly stretches out his arms to their full length, while the sun, grown yellow, covers him.*]

Ah! ah!
Here am I stretching out my arms in the rays of the sun.
Evening is come! Have pity upon every man, Lord, in that hour when he has finished his task and stands before Thee like a child whose hands are being examined.
Mine are free. My day is finished. I have planted the grain and I have harvested it, and with this bread that I have made all my children have made their communion.
Now I have finished.
A moment ago there was some one with me.
And now, wife and child having gone away,
I remain alone to say grace at the empty table.
Both of them are dead, but I,
I live, on the threshold of death, and I am filled with inexplicable joy!

[*The Angelus is rung from the church down below. First toll of three strokes.*]

Jacques Hury [*hollowly*]. The Angel of God proclaims peace to us, and the child thrills in the bosom of its mother.

[*Second toll.*]

Pierre de Craon. "Men of little faith, why do you weep?" [*Third toll.*]

Anne Vercors. "Because I go to my father and to your father."

[*Profound silence. Then peal.*]

Pierre de Craon. Thus the Angelus speaks as if with three voices, in May
When the unmarried man comes home, having buried his mother,
"Voice-of-the-Rose" speaks in the silvery evening.
O Violaine! O woman through whom comes temptation!
For, not yet knowing what I would do, I turned my eyes where you then did turn thine.
Truly I have always thought that joy was a good thing.
But now I have everything!
I possess everything, under my hands, and I am like a person who, seeing a tree laden with fruit,
And having mounted a ladder, feels the thick branches yield under his body.
I must talk under the tree, like a flute which is neither low nor shrill! How the water
Raises me! Thanksgiving unseals the stone of my heart!
How I live, thus! How I grow greater, thus mingled with my God, like the vine and the olive-tree.

[*The sun goes down.* MARA *turns her head toward her husband and looks at him.*]

Jacques Hury. See her, looking at me. See her returning to me with the night!

[*Sound of a cracked bell near by. First toll.*]

Anne Vercors. It is the little bell of the sisters that rings the Angelus in its turn.

[*Silence. Then another bell is heard,*

very high up, at Monsanvierge, sounding in its turn the triple toll, admirably sonorous and solemn.

Jacques Hury. Listen!

Pierre de Craon. A miracle!

Anne Vercors. It is Monsanvierge come to life again! The Angelus, ringing once more, brings to the listening heavens and earth the wonted tidings.

Pierre de Craon. Yes, Voice-of-the-Rose, God is born!

[*Second toll of the bell of the sisters. It strikes the third note just as Monsanvierge strikes the first.*]

Anne Vercors. God makes himself man.

Jacques Hury. He is dead!

Pierre de Craon. He is risen!

[*Third toll of the bell of the sisters. Then the peal. Pause. Then, nearly lost in the distance, are heard the three strokes of the third toll up on the heights.*]

Anne Vercors. This is not the toll of the Angelus, it is the communion bells!

Pierre de Craon. The three strokes are gathered like an ineffable sacrifice into the bosom of the Virgin without sin.

[*Their faces are turned toward the heights; they listen as if awaiting the peal, which does not come.*]

THE END

FRANCESCA DA RIMINI

By GABRIELE D'ANNUNZIO

Translated from the Italian by ARTHUR SYMONS

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GABRIELE D'ANNUNZIO AND HIS PLAYS

Gabriele D'Annunzio, the author of *Francesca da Rimini,* was born in Pescara, Italy, in 1863. His early stories and poems brought him reputation, and fame came to him in 1889 with the publication of his first novel. Since that date he has written twenty plays, several of which are associated with the name of Eleanora Duse, the most celebrated of Italian actresses, to whom he dedicates his *Gioconda.* During the world war D'Annunzio served with distinction as an aviator, and his career as a patriot and man of action is a matter of general knowledge.

As a poetic dramatist D'Annunzio is more representative of Italian drama than Rostand, another poetic dramatist, is representative of drama in France; for poetic drama has long been, and still is, very much alive in Italy. Yet D'Annunzio is not primarily a dramatist but a poet and a novelist who seems to have turned to the drama rather as an exercise for his amazing versatility than from any irresistible instinct. Certainly his poetry and novel-writing have influenced his plays, though it is not easy to distinguish between this inner influence and that which Maeterlinck has undoubtedly exercised upon his work. Like Maeterlinck, he tells his story slowly, pausing to build up, stroke by stroke, with meticulous care and with a multitude of picturesque details, the general atmosphere and environment of his play; his long-deferred climaxes come with sudden and startling power; and he achieves some of his most subtle effects through sheer verbal music, and even through mere hesitances of utterances and delicate overtones and suggestions. In his love of word-music he is characteristically Italian, as he is also in his love of color, form, and plastic beauty; and he makes as much use of the arts of the painter, sculptor, and musician as the medium of mere words will permit.

For his characteristic subject-matter D'Annunzio turns in dissatisfaction from the present to the world of the past, in which he builds a palace of art as a refuge for his soul from unpleasant realities—a gorgeous palace adorned with all the spoils of time. His world is not one merely of poetic fancy, however, for he is a learned archaeologist, with an exact scientific knowledge of detail, which the poet knows how to use for his own purposes. The way in which archaeological knowledge is transmuted and made an element contributing to the poetry in such plays as *Francesca* and *The Dead City,* is one of the marvels of literary art. Against this highly colored background and in this sensuous atmosphere, D'Annunzio's characters stand out with intense and vivid definiteness—rich and interesting personalities, under the sway of powerful emotions, usually those of love and jealousy. They are pawns of destiny, not so much deficient in will as powerless against the fate that has predetermined their fortunes.

Francesca da Rimini is easily the greatest of the many poetic tragedies that have treated the immortal love story to which Dante first gave utterance. D'Annunzio has provided for an environment characteristic of his consummate faculty for picturization—an environment suggested by the romanesque art of the century immediately preceding the Renaissance in Italy, saturated with an atmosphere compounded of love and war, beauty and brutality, sentiment and horror. The mere style of the play, the poetry of which is so well rendered into English by Arthur Symons, is a flexible and perfect medium for the expression of the matter, running with it the gamut of the emotions, tender or strong, slow or swift, as the spirit of the moment may require.

Francesca da Rimini was first performed in Rome in 1902 by Eleanora Duse and her company. The opening night, in the furor that it aroused—the clamorous enthusiasm on the one hand and the vituperous contempt on the other—was comparable only to that of Victor Hugo's *Hernani* in Paris in 1830. Apparently, the first (and, thus far, the only) production in English was made in America by the Play House, Cleveland, Ohio, in 1924, under the direction of Frederick McConnell.

CHARACTERS

Ostasio Bannino Francesca Samaritana	*Sons and Daughters of* Guido Minore da Polenta
Biancofiore Alda Garsenda Altichiara Adonella The Slave	Francesca's *Women*
Ser Toldo Berardengo Aspinello Arsendi Viviano De' Vivii Bertrando Luro An Archer.	*Partisans of* Guido
Giovanni, "The Lame," known as Gianciotto Paolo "The Beautiful" Malatestino "The One-eyed"	*Sons of* Malatesta da Verrucchio
Oddo Dalle Caminate Foscolo D'Olnano Archers. Men-at-Arms.	*Partisans of* Malatesta

The Merchant. The Merchant's Boy. The Doctor. The Jester. The Astrologer. The Musicians. The Torchbearers.

The action takes place in Ravenna and Rimini, in the thirteenth century

ACT ONE

A Court in the House of the Polentani, adjacent to a garden that shines brightly through a marble screen, pierced in the form of a transept. A loggia runs round it above, leading on the right to the women's apartments, and in front, supported on small pillars, affords a double view. On the left is a flight of steps leading down to the threshold of the enclosed garden. At the back is a large door, and a low, barred window, through which can be seen a range of arches surrounding another larger court. Near the steps is a Byzantine sarcophagus, without a lid, filled with earth, like a flower pot, in which grows a crimson rosebush.

The WOMEN *are seen, leaning over the loggia, and coming down the stairs, gazing curiously at the* JESTER, *who carries his viol hanging by his side, and in his hand an old jerkin.*

Alda. Jester, hey, Jester!
Garsenda. Adonella, Adonella, here is the Jester
In the court! O Biancofiore,
The Jester! he has come!
Adonella. Are the gates open yet?
Biancofiore. Let's make the Jester sing.
Alda. Hey, tell me, are you that Gianni . . .
Jester. Sweet ladies . . .
Alda. That Gianni who was coming from Bologna?
Gian Figo?
Garsenda. Are you Gordello who is coming from Ferrara?
Jester. Dear ladies . . .
Adonella. What are you seeking there?
Jester. The trail of the scent.
Biancofiore. We brew in limbecs oils of lavender,
And oils of spikenard.
Jester. I am no apothecary's pedlar, I.
Altichiara. You shall have a bunch though, my good nightingale,
If you will sing.
Garsenda. Look at him, how he droops!
Jester. Fair ladies, have you . . .
Biancofiore. Yes,
Heaps upon heaps.
Adonella. Bags full
And coffers full of it. Madonna Francesca
Can dip her beauty, if she has a mind to,
In oil of lavender.
Jester. I thought rather to find the smell of blood
In the house of Guido.
Alda. Blood of the Traversari: in the streets,
In the streets you will find it.
All. Polenta! Polenta! Down with the Traversari!
Jester. Heigho! Catch who catch can, go free who may!
The sparrows are becoming sparrow-hawks.
[*Shouts of laughter ring down the staircase, between the twi-horned head-dresses.*]
All. Grapple with the Ghibelline!
Jester. Be quiet now, don't let the archer hear you,
Or he will fetch me suddenly such a bolt
As will lay me out my length for all my life.
Alda. You swear you are a Guelph?
Jester. By San Mercuriale of Forlì
(That sets the belfry crumbling on the pate
Of the Feltran people) I tell you I am Guelph,
As Guelph as Malatesta da Verrucchio.
Garsenda. Good then, you are safe; only be circumspect:
You have leave to smell.
Jester. To smell? And not to eat?
I am a dog, then?
How many bitches are there in the place?
Let's see.
[*He goes down on hands and feet like a dog, and makes for the women.*]
Garsenda. Ah nasty dog!
Alda. Filthy dog!
Altichiara. Wicked dog!
Take that!
Jester. Ahi, ahi, you have smashed my viol,

You have broken my bow.
Adonella. Take that!
Garsenda. And that!
Biancofiore. And that!
Jester. They are all in heat!
I would I knew which one of you the most!
[*They all strike him on the back with their fists, laughing. And as the* JESTER *jumps about amongst them like a dog, they begin to dance round him, shaking out their perfumed skirts.*]
Biancofiore. Take hands, and dance a round!
Adonella. Do you smell the spice,
Lavender and spikenard?
Altichiara. I am flame and ice,
I am flame and ice!
Biancofiore. Fresh in cool linen is sweet lavender!
Alda. Come in, bright eyes, into my garden fair!
Altichiara. An odour comes, no garden can I find.
Adonella. How comes this lovely odour on the wind?
All. Smell! Smell!
Garsenda. Sweet shift that long in lavender has lain;
Sweetheart, the time of May has come again.
All. Smell! Smell!
Adonella. I would I had my sweetheart near my side,
And nearer than my shift is near to me.
Dear love is dear to me!
Dear love is dear to me!
All. Smell! smell! smell!
Jester [*standing up and trying to catch one of them*].
Catch who catch can!
If I catch one of you . . .
[*With cries of laughter, they run up the stairs, then stand panting with merriment.*]
Alda [*with a contemptuous gesture*].
You are no sheep dog, you!
Garsenda. You are a pantry dog,
Poor Jester! have you not
More stomach now for food than bantering?
Jester [*scratching his throat*].
May be I have. I dined some while ago.
Fine scents fill no lean paunches.
Garsenda. Well then, well,
Go rather to the Archbishop Bonifazio,
He is the biggest glutton
That eats in the world: the Genoese. This house
Is Guido da Polenta's.
Jester. Yellow with flower of the black hellebore,
Because there is no juniper in the world,
May all be salt to me,
Ravenna women have it . . . in the round,
Salt be to me!
Garsenda. Round-pated you yourself!
You thought to get the better of us, eh?
We have got the better of you.
Biancofiore. Sing, Jester!
Alda. Dance, Jester!
Jester [*picking up his rag*].
You have pulled me all to pieces,
Mischief o' me! Have you, by chance, a little . . .
Garsenda. A little bacon?
Jester. Have you a little scarlet?
Adonella. Are you for jesting with us? We are ready.
Biancofiore. But who are you? that Gianni . . .
Altichiara. O, Biancofiore, look what clothes he has!
The doublet is at loggerheads with the hose.
Garsenda. He is Gian Figo, who was coming from Bologna.
Biancofiore. Come from Bologna without a bolognino.
Alda. I am sure he is of the Lambertazza party.
Garsenda. An evil race!
Alda. He has been put to shame
By the Geremei.
Altichiara. Have you not lost a princedom, noble sir?
Garsenda. O, Adonella, look at him: he has fled
In nothing but his trousers.
Jester. And you will have them off me.
Adonella. What a poor thing! Look at yourself in the glass,
As crooked as a cross-bow on its stock.
Biancofiore. Now you will sing the spoiling of Bologna,
And how King Enzo was made prisoner.
Garsenda. Have I not told you he is from Ferrara?
Jester [*impatiently*].
I am from Ferrara and I am from Bologna.

Garsenda. Was it then you
Who escorted from Bologna to Ferrara
Ghisolabella de' Caccianimici
To the good Marchese Opizzo?
Jester. Just so, just so, 'twas I, just as you say.
Garsenda. It was you too who made
The match between the sister of the Marquese
And that old and rich judge, him of Gallura,
A shrivelled, wizened thing
That had the help of his big man-servant?
Jester. Just so, 'twas I, just as you say; and I had
In thanks for it . . .
Alda. A bone?
Adonella. Two chestnuts?
Biancofiore. Three
Walnuts and a hazel-nut?
Altichiara. A stump of pimpernel?
Garsenda. A pair of snails
And an acorn?
Jester. This mantle that you see, of Irish frieze?
No; or of purple Tyrian samite? no;
But all of velvet crimson-coloured, lined
With skins of miniver.
Garsenda. Look, look, Altichiara,
The thing he is holding!
Altichiara. A little threadbare cloak.
Garsenda. No, no, it is a Romagna jerkin.
Alda. Then
You are Gordello, you are not Gian Figo.
Adonella. But no, he is a Jew.
Biancofiore. He is the huckster Lotto
Of Porto Sisi.
Altichiara. Sells fripperies and songs.
Adonella. What have you with you? Have you rags or ballads?
Jester. Fool that I am, I thought to find myself
In the palace of the nobles of Polenta,
And here I am in a chirping nest of swallows.
Garsenda. Comfort yourself, I am satisfied by now
That I have taught you, Master Merry-maker,
Ravenna women are not easily beaten
At the game of banter.
Jester. And of the pole, too.
Alda. You chuckle over it?
Adonella. Will you whet your whistle?
Biancofiore. No, Alda: come now, make him sing to us.
Garsenda. Do you not see the sorry sort of viol
He trails here, Adonella?
It seems to me a sort of pumpkin cowled,
With its big belly and its monstrous neck.
The rose is meanly cut,
Here's a peg missing, here
The bass and tierce are gone.
Well, if he barks, his viol gapes in answer.
Go, scrawl arpeggios
Upon a rebeck, let the bow alone.
Biancofiore. You let the joke alone, then, Mona Berta.
Let us see now if he knows how to sing.
Come on then, Jester,
And sing us, if you can, a pretty song.
Do you know any of that Troubadour
Who calls himself the Notary of Lentino?
Madonna Francesca knows a lovely one
Beginning this way: "Very mightily
Love holds me captive." Do you know the song?
Jester. Yes, I will say it now,
If you have a little scarlet.
Altichiara. But what is it you want then, with your scarlet?
Adonella. We are waiting, we are waiting!
Jester. I want you, if you will,
To put a patch for me
Upon this jerkin.
Altichiara. What a mad idea,
To patch Romagna woollen, and with scarlet!
Jester. I pray you, if you have it, do for me
This service. There is one tear here, in front,
Another on the elbow; here it is.
Have you two scraps?
Altichiara. I will put it right for you
If you will sing to us.
But I assure you, 'tis a novelty
To set the two together.
Jester. I go about in search of novelties,
As novel as myself:
That's just the reason.
But not long since I found a novelty,
As I was on my way:
I met with one,
Not two miles out of here,
That had his head of iron,

His legs of wood, and talked with both his shoulders.
Biancofiore. This is a novelty in very deed,
But tell us how.
Adonella. We are waiting! we are waiting!
Jester. Listen, and I will tell you. I met with one
That wore an iron headpiece on his head
And went to gather fir-cones in the wood
Here at Ravenna, and he went on crutches,
And when I asked him had he seen about
A little friend of mine, he shrugged his shoulders,
Saying by this means
He had not seen him.
Biancofiore [*contemptuously*]. But this is a true thing.
Jester. Am I not novel,
That tell true things for fables? Catch who catch can!
So, you will do then what I asked of you?
And after you have done it,
You shall wait no great while before you learn,
The occasion offering, that Gian Figo . . .
Garsenda. Ah!
You have let it out at last.
All. He is Gian Figo!
Jester. Before you learn Gian Figo is as wise
As Dinadan the King of Orbeland's son,
That found his wisdom by forgetting love.
Altichiara. But now enough of this: time for a song!
Biancofiore. "There comes a time to rise . . ."
Do you not know the song King Enzo made,
The King that lost his kingdom in a battle
Against Bologna, and was put in prison
In a big iron cage, and ended his life there,
Singing his sorrows?
Seven years ago in March: I can remember.
"There comes a time to rise, a time to fall,
A time for speaking and for keeping silence."
Adonella. No, no, Gian Figo,
Tell us instead the song
Made by King John, John of Jerusalem,
"For the flower of all the lands."
Garsenda. No, tell us that of good King Frederick,
"A song of pure delight"
(Madonna Francesca, the flower of all Ravenna
Knows it) made for the flower
Of Soria when the sire of Suabia
Loved a most worthy maiden
His wife had brought with her from over sea,
And brought to honour; and this wife of the King
Of Suabia was no other than the daughter
Of John, King of Jerusalem, and her name
Was Isabella, and she died, and then
King Frederick took for his wife the sister
Of the simple Henry of England; and he loved her
Exceedingly, because, like our Madonna
Francesca, she was skilled
In music, and all ways of lovely speech;
And this was the third wedding; and she, then,
That sang and played all day and all night long,
Had . . .
[BIANCOFIORE *covers her mouth with her hand.*]
Jester. What a bibble babble! O poor King Enzo,
There never is a time here to be silent.
What's to be done with all your merchandise,
Gian Figo, chitter, chatter, chattering,
Here are four voices, and more like a thousand!
Altichiara. Listen to me now, Jester. Let the King
Alone. He is dead and buried. Say instead
"O mother mine,
Give me a husband." "Tell me why, my child."
"That he may give me happy . . ."
Alda. That is old:
Listen to me, Jester.
Altichiara. Then, "Monna Lapa,
She spun and span . . ."
Alda. No!
Altichiara. Then: "O garden-close,
I enter and nobody knows."
Alda. Hush!
Altichiara. Then: "Let's all
Have seven lovers,
That's one for every day of the week."
Alda. Hush!
Altichiara. Then:
"Monna Aldruda, don't be a prude, a
Piece of good news . . ."

Alda. O hush! Biancofiore,
Do shut her mouth. Jester, listen to me:
These are old songs . . .
Adonella. There's a new troubadour
Known at Bologna: surely you have heard him?
He's the new fashion;
They call him Messer Guido . . . Messer Guido
Di . . . di . . .
Jester. Di Guinizello.
He was one that went out with the Lambertazzi,
Took refuge at Verona, and there died.
Alda. Good, let him die: he's for the Emperor.
May he go now and make his rhymes in hell!
Listen to me, Jester; tell us a story
Of knights.
Biancofiore. Yes, yes, the knights of the Round Table!
Do you know their stories?
The love of Iseult of the golden hair?
Jester. I know the histories of all the knights
And all the knightly deeds of chivalry
Done in King Arthur's time,
And specially I know of Messer Tristan
And Messer Lancelot of the Lake, and Messer
Percival of the Grail, that took the blood
Of our Lord Jesus Christ, and of Galahad,
And of Gawain, and the rest. I know them all.
Alda. Of Guenevere?
Adonella. Good luck, Jester, good luck!
We will tell Madonna Francesca what you know,
Will we not, Alda?
She takes delight in them;
Jester, she will reward you bountifully.
Jester. She will give me the remainder . . .
Adonella. What remainder?
Jester. Why, the two scraps of scarlet.
Adonella. She will give you
Quite other gifts, the bountifullest gifts.
Rejoice that she is marrying;
Messer Guido marries her to a Malatesta;
The wedding day is close at hand.
Biancofiore. Meanwhile
Tell us a story: we are all ears. "There is time
To listen," said the prisoner.

[*They group themselves about the* JESTER, *leaning towards him: he begins.*]

Jester. How the fay Morgana sent to Arthur's Court
The shield foretelling the great love to be
Between good Tristan and the flower-like Iseult;
And this shall be between the loveliest lady
And the most knightly knight in all the world.
And how Iseult and Tristan drank together
The draught of love that Iseult's mother, Lotta,
Had destined for her daughter and King Mark.
And how the draught of love, being perfect, brought
Both these two lovers to one single death.

[*The* WOMEN *stand listening, the* JESTER *preludes on the viol and sings.*]

Now, when the dawn of day was nigh at hand,
King Mark of Cornwall and good Tristan rose . . .
The Voice of Ostasio [*behind the scenes*].
Tell him, the Puglian thief,
Tell him, I say, that I will wash my hands
And feet in his heart's blood!
Alda. Messer Ostasio!
Garsenda. Come away, come, come!

[*They scatter, and rush up the stairs, with laughter and cries, and along the loggia.*]

Jester. My jerkin, my good jerkin! I commend you,
My jerkin, and the scarlet!
Altichiara [*leaning over the loggia*]. Come back at noon:
It shall be ready.

[OSTASIO DA POLENTA *enters by the great door at the back, accompanied by* SER TOLDO BERARDENGO.]

Ostasio [*seizing the terrified* JESTER]. What are you doing here, rascal?
Whom were you talking with, the women? How
Did you come here? Answer me, I say. Are you
From Messer Paola Malatesta? Now,

Answer!
Jester. O sir, you are holding me too hard.
Ahi!
Ostasio. Did you come here with Messer Paolo?
Jester. No, sir.
Ostasio. You lie!
Jester. Yes, sir.
Ostasio. You were talking with
The women; what did you say? something, no doubt,
Concerning Messer Paolo. What was it?
Jester. No, sir, no, sir, only of Messer Tristan.
Ostasio. Take care; you do not trifle with me twice,
Or you shall keep this tryst of yours with Tristan
Longer than you intend, unseemly fool.
Jester. Ahi, ahi! what have I done to vex you, sir?
I was only singing something.
I was only singing a song of the Round Table.
The ladies asked me for a history
Of knights . . . I am a Jester and I sing
From hunger, and my hunger
Hoped better things than beating in the house
Of the most noble Messer Guido. I,
That keep no hack, have footed
From the Castle of Calbeli
All the way here: I left
Messer Rinieri fortifying his keep
With some seven hundred strong
Of infantry.
Ostasio. You come from Calbeli?
Jester. Yes, sir.
Ostasio. Were you ever with the Malatesti
At Rimino?
Jester. No, sir; never, sir.
Ostasio. Then
You do not know Messer Paolo, the Beautiful,
That dotes on jesters, and would have them sing
And play at all times in his company?
Jester. Unluckily I do not know him, sir,
But I would gladly know him. And if I find him,
I pray to be found always at his side.
Long life to Messer Paolo Malatesta!
[*He is about to retire hastily.* Ostasio *catches hold of him again, and calls the* Archer *who is on guard in the other Court.*]
Ostasio. Jacomello!
Jester. What have I done, and why
Do you do me violence?
Ostasio. Too much talk.
Jester. I am mute.
It is hunger barking in me. Keep me prisoner
In the kitchen, and I will be as still as oil.
Ostasio. Will you be silent, rascal? Jacomello!
I give this prattle-seller to your charge,
See that you bit and bib him.
Jester. A spice cake,
Give me a spice cake.
Ostasio. Give him a box on the ears.
Jester [*as the* Archer *thrusts him out*].
When Madonna Francesca knows how you have used me . . .
I am to sing at her wedding.
Long life to Messer Paolo Malatesta!
[*Raging, and full of suspicion,* Ostasio *draws the* Notary *towards the sarcophagus.*]
Ostasio. These jesters and the like men of the Court
Here in Romagna are a very plague,
Worse than the Emperor's rabble. They are tongues
Of women; they know everything, say everything;
They go about the world
Spreading abroad their news and novelties;
Their ears are at the keyholes of us all.
Who wants to know how the good Papal Rector
Lay with the wife of Lizio da Valbona?
Who wants to know
How much Rinieri da Calbeli has taken
Out of the purses of the Geremei?
As for this rascal
That gossiped with the women of Francesca,
If he had been a jester
Of the Malatesti
By now the women had heard all the news
There is to tell of Paolo,
And all the cunning plan had been vain,
Ser Toldo, that you counselled
Out of your manifold wisdom.
Ser Toldo. As for him,
He was so poor and threadbare,
How could I take him for a follower

Of such a lordly knight as Paolo,
He being so bountiful
With gentry such as these?
But you are well-advised in bitting him.
These creatures of the Court
May be by way of being soothsayers,
And often steal the trade
Of the astrologers.
Ostasio. True. And this slave
Of Cyprus, that my sister loves so dearly,
I have my doubts of her; she too, I think,
Is something of a soothsayer; I know
That she interprets dreams. The other day
I saw my sister full of heavy thoughts,
And almost sorrowful,
As if some evil dream had come to her;
And only yesterday
I heard her heave such a long, heavy sigh
As if she had a trouble in her heart,
And I heard Samaritana
Say to her: "What is it, sister? Why do you weep?"
Ser Toldo. Messer Ostasio, it is the month of May.
Ostasio. In truth there is no peace for us until
This marriage is well over. And I fear,
Ser Toldo, lest some scandal come of it.
Ser Toldo. Yet you know well, what sort
Of woman is your sister, and how high
Of heart and mind. If she see this Gianciotto,
So lamed and bent, and with those eyes of his,
As of an angry devil,
Before the marriage-contract
Be signed and sealed, why, neither will your father
Nor you, nor any, of a certainty
Bring her to take
The man for husband, not although you set
Your dagger at her throat, or haled her through
Ravenna by the hair.
Ostasio. I know it well, Ser Toldo, for my father
Gave her for foster-mother
A sword of his of a miraculous edge,
That he had tempered in Cesena blood
When he was Podestà.
Ser Toldo. Well then, I say,
If this be so, and you desire the match,
There is no other way to compass it.
And seeing that Paolo Malatesta comes
As procurator of Gianciotto here,
And with full powers
For the betrothal of Madonna Francesca,
I say you should proceed
Instantly to the marriage,
If you would sleep in peace, Messer Ostasio.
Paolo is a fair and pleasant youth,
And makes a brave decoy,
Undoubtedly; yet it is far too easy
To learn that he is married to Orabile.
And you, did you not beat this jester but
For fear of idle talk?
Ostasio. Yes, you are right,
Ser Toldo; we must put an end to this.
My father is returning from Valdoppio
This very night; we will have all prepared
And ready for to-morrow.
Ser Toldo. Very good,
Messer Ostasio.
Ostasio. Yet . . . What will come of it?
Ser Toldo. If you do all, as all this should be done,
With secrecy and prudence, Madonna Francesca
Will find out nothing till at Rimino,
She wakes, the morning after
Her wedding day, and sees
Beside her . . .
Ostasio. Ah, it is like some vile revenge!
Ser Toldo. And sees beside her rise
Gianciotto.
Ostasio. O, she is so beautiful!
And we avenge ourselves upon her beauty,
Almost as if she wronged our house and us
In coming to be born
Here like a flower in the midst of so much iron.
We are giving her to the lame Malatesta
For the sake of that poor hundred infantry!
But is she not herself
Worth more than all the lordship of Romagna?
False notary, how did you poison first
My father's mind? All this
Is your base bargaining. I will not have it.
Do you understand?
Ser Toldo. Why, what tarantula bites you,
Messer Ostasio?
Surely you will not find
A better match to make in all Romagna?
Ostasio. The Malatesti? Who then after all
Are these Verrucchio folk? By this alliance
Shall we have got Cesena,

Cervia, Faenza, Forlì, Civitella,
Half of Romagna?
A hundred infantry!
To hunt the Traversara region, O
The mighty succour!
And Dovadella, and Zello, and Montaguto
Already in our power perhaps. Gianciotto!
But who is he, Gianciotto? When I think
How that Traversarian widow,
That ancient scabby bitch, has mated with
(After the nephew of the Pope) the son
Of Andrea, the King of Hungary. . . .
Ser Toldo. What is the King of Hungary to you?
Ostasio. But here are we, with this Puglian clodhopper,
This Guglielmetto that now vaunts himself
As the legitimate heir
Of Paolo Traversari,
And harries us; and we shall never break him
With this mere hundred infantry, and he
Will surely come again with help from Foglia.
What shall we hope for then
From Malatesta?
Ser Toldo. Malatesta is the chief of all the Guelphs
Now in Romagna, and the chief defender
Of the Church, and he has the favour of the Pope,
And he was made the governor of Florence
Under King Charles, and whosoever seeks
A captain. . . .
Ostasio. Notary!
Guido di Montefeltro shattered him,
Once, at the bridge of San Procolo. Notary,
Guglielmino de' Pazzi drove him back
At Reversano, and has made him since
Give up the fortress of Cesena.
Ser Toldo. Ay,
But the victory at Colle di Valdelsa
Against the Sienese,
The time he slaughtered Provenzan Salvani?
But when he made Count Guido prisoner
On the borders of Ancona, and brought him back,
Him and his men, to Rimino? But when
He intercepted
The famous secret letters
From the Emperor Baldwin to King Manfred? Come,
In truth it seems to me,
Messer Ostasio,
Your memory is then no longer Guelph.
Ostasio. If the Devil comes to me and lends me a hand
That I may root and ruin the evil race
Of the slave Pasquetta and the Puglian hag,
I am for the Devil, notary.
Ser Toldo. Ah, ah! I guessed the truth:
It is the tarantula of Puglia bites you.
Ostasio. The Emperor Frederick (God, for this thing
Grant him a cup of water down in hell!)
Had utterly destroyed the seed of them,
When he hurled Aica Traversari headlong
Into the fiery furnace.
And lo, one day there comes into Ravenna
A certain slave, Pasquetta, with her sweetheart,
And tells you: "I am Aica,"
And comes on one Filippo, an Archbishop,
And he affirms her the legitimate heir,
And with the taking over of the Dukedom
Makes her the lady mistress! And from that
The filthy vagabond of a husband holds
The headship of the very Ghibelline party
Against the house of Polenta! O Ser Toldo,
Now we are doing deeds of chivalry
Against Guglielmo Francisio, bastard
Of shepherd-folk. Do you understand?
Ser Toldo. But you,
Have you not driven him out of Ravenna?
Ostasio. With the infantry of Gianciotto Malatesta?
Ser Toldo. You are ungrateful, Messer Ostasio.
Gianciotto Malatesta in two days
Broke all the bars and gratings in the streets;
Between Sant' Agata and Porta San Mamante,
He massacred the gang
Of the Anastagi;
Between San Simone and Porta San Vittore
His heavy cross-bolts cleared
The whole pack in a breath.
Nor is he ever one to spare himself,
But proved his courage,
There, with a buckler braced about his arm,
A rapier in his hand;
And always in the crush
Set on his priceless horse,
A raging beast that gave his enemies

What travail more he could, so that he had
Always some dozen more or less of men
Under his horse's hoof; and Stefano
Sibaldo, that stood by,
Swears, when the Lamester does
A feat of arms, it is beautiful to see him;
He is a master in the art of war!
Ostasio. O Ser Toldo, you had certainly your share
Of the booty! You will take away their skill
From those who sang the song of the twelve barons
Of Charlemagne,
Lord of the flowing beard. How much, I pray,
Came to your share?
Ser Toldo. The tarantula of Puglia
Is a certain sort of spider,
That brings all kinds of luck to those he bites.
I am not now, alas,
All that I have been once!
But the Malatesti always have been ill
Bearers of shame, and now Gianciotto knows
The way by which one gets inside the walls
Here at Ravenna. . . . But you might give your sister,
No doubt, to the Prince Royal of Salerno,
Or to the Doge of Venice.
Ostasio [*absorbed*]. Ah! is she
Not worth a kingdom? How beautiful she is!
There never was a sword that went so straight
As her eyes go, if they but look at you.
Yesterday she was saying: "Who is it
You give me to?" When she walks, and her hair
Falls all about her to her waist, and down
To her strong knees (she is strong, though very pale)
And her head sways a little, she gives forth joy
Like flags that wave in the wind
When one sets forth against a mighty city
In polished armour. Then
She seems as if she held
The eagle of Polenta
Fast in her fist, like a trained hawk, to fling him
Forth to the prey. Yesterday she was saying:
"Who is it you give me to?"
Why should I see her die?
Ser Toldo. Now you might give your sister
To the King of Hungary
Or better, to the Paleologue.
Ostasio. Be silent,
Ser Toldo, for to-day
I am not patient.
The Voice of Bannino. Ostasio! Ostasio!
Ostasio. By God! here is Bannino, here is the bastard
That pants and lolls his tongue.
I knew it.

[BANNINO *appears at the door at the back of the stage, panting and dishevelled, like a fugitive, with* ASPINELLO, ARSENDI, VIVIANO DE' VIVII, *and* BERTRANDO LUBO, *who are bleeding and covered with dust.*]

Bannino. Ostasio!
The men of Forlì have attacked the waggons
Of salt, by Cervia;
They have put to flight the convoy and overturned
The waggons.
Ostasio [*shouting*]. Ah, I knew it!
But they have not cut your throat?
Aspinello. The Ghibellines that were exiled from Bologna.
With those too of Faenza and Forlì
Gather in companies over all the land
And are laying all things waste with fire and sword.
Ostasio. Jesu our Lord, good tidings for your Vicar!
Viviano. And they have burned Monte Vecchio, Valcapra,
Pianetto. They have laid waste Strabatanza and Biserno
For Lizio da Valbona,
They have laid waste, for the Count
Ugo da Cerfugnano,
The country of Rontana and of Quarmento.
Ostasio. God of mercy, still good tidings,
Good things to thy servants, and good tidings!
Bertrando. Guido di Montefeltro
Takes horse to Calbeli
With engines, and balistas;
And he will have the castle.
Ostasio. More! More!
Christ Jesus, to thy praise always!

Viviano. There was Scarpetta
Of the Ordelaffi with the Forlì folk.
Bannino. They have put to flight the convoy and overturned
The waggons and taken cattle
And horses, and have killed
Malvincino da Lozza
And many soldiers, and made prisoner
Pagano Coffa; and the others in disorder
Have fled in search of safety towards the sea.
Ostasio. And you, you towards the land,
As fast as horse could carry you. I knew it,
I knew it well.
Where did you leave your sword?
And you have thrown away your helmet too.
Save himself he who can! That is your cry.
Bannino. My sword? I broke my sword
In the very rage of striking blows with it.
There were three hundred, maybe four, against us.
Aspinello, Bertrando,
Say, both of you, and you
Viviano, say if I did well or no.
I had against me more than twenty men
That would have taken me; and I carved my life
With my own hand out of their flesh and bone.
Say, all of you!
Ostasio. You see
They cannot answer for you; they are tasked
To stanch the flowing of their blood, and wipe
The dust away that clings about their faces.
But you are clean, you; cuirass, sleeves, all clean,
Spotless. Your enemies
Had got no veins then in their bodies? You
Have not a scratch upon your whited face,
O mighty man of valour in your words!
[*The* Three Soldiers, *taking their harness off their backs, and wiping it, move away.*]
Bannino. Ostasio! Ostasio! Enough!
Ostasio. I knew it well,
I had but laughter when
My father picked you out
To lead the waggon safely in. I said:
"May the good Bishop of Cervia
Preserve him with his crozier! In Ravenna
'Tis very certain we shall have no salt."
Did I say wrong? Go, go, Bannino, go
And mince the lungs of hares into a dish
For sparrow-hawks.
Bannino. You should be silent. You,
While I was in the fray,
Stayed safe at home, plotting with notaries.
Ostasio. O lord and leader of harlots, you shall know
That if the men of Forlì did not catch you,
Because you were too nimble,
'Tis I will catch you.
Bannino. What? with treachery,
After your fashion?
Ostasio. I will do it so that you,
This time at least, do not go whimpering home
To tell my father.
Ser Toldo. Peace! Peace!
Bannino. I will tell him
Something I know, this time.
Ostasio. What do you know?
Bannino. You know the thing I mean.
Ser Toldo. Peace, peace, O peace!
Be brothers!
Ostasio. He is from another nest.
Ser Toldo. Messer Ostasio, he is but a boy.
Ostasio. Speak then, if you know how to wound a man
At any rate with your tongue.
Bannino. You know the thing
I mean. I keep my counsel.
Ostasio. No, pour out
Your gall, that is now painted in your face,
Or I will wring you up as if I wrung
A wet rag out.
Bannino. Ostasio,
I am not so skilled in pouring out my gall
As you your wine
With an unshaken hand.
Ostasio. What wine?
Bannino. Your wine, pure wine, pure wine, I mean.
Ostasio. Listen to me, bastard!
Bannino. Our good old father
Fell sick one day. With what a tenderness
You watched about him, O you best of sons!
Do you know now? do you know? I know a thing
That you too know.
God dry your right hand up!

Ostasio. Ah, what a woman's lie is that!
O bastard,
Your day has come at last;
No use in flying from the enemy!
[*He draws his sword and rushes upon* BANNINO, *who leaps aside and avoids the blow. He is about to follow him, when* SER TOLDO *tries to draw him back.*]
Ser Toldo. Messer Ostasio, what is it you would do?
Let him alone! Let him alone! He is
Your brother. What would you do to him?
[*The* SLAVE *comes out on the loggia and watches.*]
Bannino [*terrified*]. O father,
O father, help! Francesca, O sister, help!
No! you will kill me. Wretch! Wretch!
No, no, pardon,
Ostasio! No, I will not tell . . .
[*Seeing the point at his throat, he kneels down.*]
The poison
Was not yours.
[*The* THREE SOLDIERS, *unarmed, have come back.*]
No, I will not tell! O pardon!
[OSTASIO *wounds him in the cheek. He swoons.*]
Ostasio. Nothing, nothing, it is nothing.
[*He leans over and looks at him.*]
It is nothing;
He has fainted; I have only pricked the skin;
Not in a bad place, no; and not in anger.
I pricked him just a little
That he might learn not to fear naked steel,
That he might bear him better in the fray
And not lose sword and helmet
When he turns tail next on the Ghibelline.
[*The* THREE SOLDIERS *lift* BANNINO.]
Take him away to Maestro Gabbadeo,
And let his wounds be staunched
With salt out of the Cervia salt-mines.
[*He watches the wounded man as he is borne away, then closes the great door with a clang. The* SLAVE *silently retires from the loggia.*]
Come,
Ser Toldo, let us go.
Ser Toldo. What will your father
Say when he comes?
Ostasio. My father
Is much too kind to this young bastardling.
[*He looks gloomily on the ground.*]
He is from another nest, and he was hatched
Not by the eagle, no, but by a jay.
Did you not hear what he was stuttering?
About a wine, a wine . . .
[*He pauses grimly.*]
It was a stock
Suborned by some one of the Anastagi.
Christ guard my father and my house from traitors!
Ser Toldo. And Madonna Francesca, then?
Ostasio. Yes, we will give her
To the Malatesta.
Ser Toldo. May God prosper it!
Ostasio. The vengeances that wait for us are great
And many, and some tears shall flow in the world,
Please God, more bitter than the salt in all
The salt-mines of this Cervia. Come with me,
Ser Toldo, Paolo Malatesta waits.
[*They go out.*]
[*The* SLAVE *reappears, carrying a bucket and a sponge. She comes down the stairs in silence, barefooted. She looks at the bloodstains on the pavement and goes down on her knees to wash them up. From the rooms above is heard the song of the* WOMEN.]
Chorus of Women.
Ah me, the sorrow of heart
In the heart that loves too well. Ah me!
Ah me, if the heart could tell
How love in the heart is a flame. Ah me!
[FRANCESCA *and* SAMARITANA *are seen coming out on the loggia side by side, with their arms about each other. The chorus of* WOMEN *follows them, carrying distaffs of different colours; but pauses on the lighted loggia, standing as in a singing gallery, while the two sisters go down the stairs to the level of the garden. The* SLAVE, *having washed out the stains, hurriedly pours the bloodstained water in her bucket into the sarcophagus among the flowers.*]

Francesca [*pausing on the stairs*].
It is love makes them sing!
[*She throws back her head a little, as if abandoning herself to the breath of the melody, light and palpitating.*]
Women. Ah me, the sorrow and shame,
In the sad heart on the morrow. Ah me!
Francesca. They are intoxicated with these odours.
Do you not hear them? With a sighing fall
Sadly they sing
The things of perfect joy.
[*She withdraws her arm from her sister's waist, and moves a little away, pausing while the other takes another step downward.*]
Women. Ah me, the bitter sorrow.
All life long. Ah me!
Francesca. Like running water
That goes and goes, and the eye sees it not,
So is my soul.
Samaritana [*with a sudden alarm, clinging closer to her sister*].
Francesca,
Where are you going, who is taking you?
Francesca. Ah, you awaken me.
[*The song pauses. The* WOMEN *turn their backs, looking down into the other court. They seem to be on the watch. The twi-horned headdresses and the tall distaffs shine in the sun, and now and then there is a whispering and rustling of lips and garments in the clear sunlight.*]
Samaritana. O, sister, sister,
Listen to me: stay with me still! O stay
With me! we were born here,
Do not forsake me, do not go away,
Let me still keep my bed
Beside your bed, and let me still at night
Feel you beside me.
Francesca. He has come.
Samaritana. Who? Who has come
To take you from me?
Francesca. Sister, he has come.
Samaritana. He has no name, he has no countenance,
And we have never seen him.
Francesca. It may be
That I have seen him.
Samaritana. I have never been apart
From you, and from your breath;
My life has never seen but with your eyes;
O, where can you have seen him, and not I
Seen him as well?
Francesca. Where you
Can never come, sweetheart, in a far place
And in a lonely place
Where a great flame of fire
Burns, and none feed that flame.
Samaritana. You speak to me in riddles,
And there is like a veil over your face.
Ah, and it seems as if you had gone away,
And from far off
Turned and looked back; and your voice sounds to me
As out of a great wind.
Francesca. Peace, peace, dear soul,
My little dove. Why are you troubled? Peace;
You also, and ere long,
Shall see your day of days,
And leave our nest as I have left it; then
Your little bed shall stand
Empty beside my bed; and I no more
Shall hear through dreams at dawn
Your little naked feet run to the window,
And no more see you, white and barefooted,
Run to the window, O my little dove,
And no more hear you say to me: "Francesca,
Francesca, now the morning-star is born,
And it has chased away the Pleiades."
Samaritana. So we will live, ah me,
So we will live forever;
And time shall flee away,
Flee away always!
Francesca. And you will no more say to me at morn:
"What was it in your bed that made it creak
Like reeds in the wind?" Nor shall I answer you:
"I turned about to sleep,
To sleep and dream, and saw,
As I was sleeping, in the dream I dreamed . . ."
Ah I shall no more tell you what is seen
In dreams. And we will die,
So we will die forever;
And time shall flee away,
Flee away always!
Samaritana. O Francesca, O Francesca, you hurt my heart,
And see, Francesca,
You make me tremble all over.

Francesca. Little one, peace,
Peace, be at rest.
Samaritana. You told me of the dream
You dreamed last night, and while
You spoke I seemed to hear
A sound of voices calling out in anger,
And then a cry, and then
The sound of a door shutting; and then silence.
You did not finish telling me your dream,
For then
The women began singing, and you stopped;
And you have left my heart in pain for you.
Whom is it that our father gives you to?
Francesca. Sister, do you remember how one day
In August we were on the tower together?
We saw great clouds rise up out of the sea,
Great clouds heavy with storm,
And there was a hot wind that gave one thirst;
And all the weight of the great heavy sky
Weighed over on our heads; and we saw all
The forest round about, down to the shore
Of Chiassi, turn to blackness, like the sea;
And we saw birds flying in companies
Before the murmurs growing on the wind.
Do you remember? We were on the tower;
And then, all of a sudden, there was dead
Silence. The wind was silent, and I heard
Only the beating of your little heart;
And then a hammer beat,
As by the roadside some flushed plunderer,
Hot for more plunder, bent
Shoeing his horse in haste.
The forest was as silent as the shadow
Over the tombs;
Ravenna, dusk and hollow as a city
Sacked by the enemy, at nightfall. We,
We two, under that cloud
(Do you remember?) felt as if death came
Nearer, yet moved no eyelid, but stood there,
Waiting the thunder.

[*She turns to the* SLAVE, *who stands motionless beside the sarcophagus.*]

O Smaragdi, who,
Who was it, in the song among your people,
That stood, shoeing his horse under the moon,
And when his mother spoke to him, and said:
"My son, I pray you take not in your course
The sister when you take the brother, nor
Lovers that love each other with true love,"
Answered her sourly back:
"If three I find, three I take; if I find
Two, I take one; and if I find but one,
I take the one I find"?
What was the name they gave him in your land?
Slave. An evil name
It is not good for any man to name.
Francesca. Tell me, what will you do without me here,
Smaragdi? What is there that I can leave you
When I go hence?
Slave. Three cups of bitterness
Leave me:
The first that I may drink at early morning;
The second, on the stroke
Of mid-day; and the third,
Soon after vespers.
Francesca. No, I will not leave
Three cups of bitterness, but you shall come
With me, Smaragdi, to the city of Rimino,
And you shall be with me, and we will have
A window opening upon the sea,
And I will tell you over all my dreams,
Because you see unveiled
The face of sorrow and the face of joy;
And I will speak to you of that most sweet
Sister, my little dove;
And you will stand, and, looking through the window,
See all the skiffs and galleys on the sea,
And you will sing: "My galley of Barbary,
What is the port you make for, and the shore
Where you would anchor? Cyprus I would make for,
And at Limisso anchor,
And land my sailors for a kiss, my captain,
For love!" Come now, must I not take you with me
To Rimino, Smaragdi?
Slave. To go with you
It were a happiness to tread on thorns,
And to pass through the flames
To be with you.

You are the heaven with stars,
The sea with waves.
Francesca. The sea with waves!
But tell me, what are you doing with the bucket,
Smaragdi?
Slave. I have watered
The roses.
Francesca. Why then have you watered them
Out of their season? Why? Samaritana
Will be angry with you. She
Gives water to the roses
As soon as the bell sounds for vespers. Come,
What do you say, Samaritana?
Samaritana. I would let them die, because,
Francesca, you are going away from us.
Francesca. O beautiful, and perchance
A holy thing, being born in this most ancient
Sarcophagus that was the sepulchre
Perchance of some great martyr or of some
Glorious virgin!
[*She walks round the sarcophagus, touching with her fingers the carvings on the four sides.*]
The Redeemer treads
Under his feet the lion and the snake;
Mary saluted by Elizabeth;
Our Lady, and the angel bids "All hail!"
The stags are drinking at the running brook.
[*She stretches out her arms towards the rose-tree.*]
And now the blood of martyrdom reflowers
In purple and in fire. Behold, behold,
Sister, the ardent flame,
Behold the roses that are full of fire!
Here did our own hands plant them, on a day,
It was October, on a day of battle
That crimsoned the red eagle of Polenta.
Do you remember? How the trumpets sounded
From Porta Gaza to the Torre Zancana,
As the new flag unfurled,
The flag our father
Had bid us make for him with forty yards
Of crimson cloth: it was a mighty flag-pole.
Do you remember?
And we had broidered round about the hem
A border fringe of gold.
It conquered! And from then
We held these roses
To be a blessed thing, we held them spotless
And undefiled as a white virginal robe;
And there was never plucked
One of these roses, and three springtides through
They blossomed into flower and fell to dust
In the sarcophagus.
But never have they flowered until this May,
Such floods, such floods of them.
There are a hundred. Look!
They burn me if I touch them.
The virgins vowed to Saint Apollinaris
Burn not with such an ardour in their heaven
Of gold. Samaritana,
Samaritana, which of them say you
Found here a sepulchre
After her glorious martyrdom? O, which
Of these was sepulchred
Here, tell me, here, after her martyrdom?
Look, look: it is the miracle of the blood!
Samaritana [*frightened, drawing her towards herself*].
Sister, what is it, sister?
You speak as if you raved.
What is it? Speak!
Biancofiore [*from the loggia*]. Madonna Francesca!
Adonella. Madonna
Francesca!
Francesca. Who calls for me?
Adonella. Come up here! O come quick!
Alda. Here, here, Madonna Francesca, come up here
And see!
Adonella. Come quickly. It is your betrothed
Who is passing.
Biancofiore. He is passing through the court,
He is with your brother, Messer Ostasio;
And here too is Ser Toldo Berardengo,
The notary, he is with them.
Alda. Here, here! Madonna Francesca, come up quickly.
He is there, he is there!
[FRANCESCA *goes hastily up the stairs.* SAMARITANA *is about to follow her, but stops, overcome.*]
Adonella [*pointing him out to* FRANCESCA, *who leans over to look*].
See, there is he who comes
To be your husband.

Garsenda. O most happy lady,
Most happy lady,
He is the fairest knight in all the world,
In very truth. See now
How his hair falls, and waves about his shoulders
In the new way, the Angevin way!
Alda. And how
Well made he is, a proper man, well girded
About the surcoat with the hanging sleeves
That almost touch the ground.
Alda. And what a splendid clasp and what an aglet!
Biancofiore. And tall! And slender! And a royal carriage!
Adonella. And how his teeth are white!
He smiled a little, and I saw them glitter.
Did you not see, did you
Not see?
Garsenda. O, happy, happy shall she be
That kisses him on the mouth!
Francesca. Be silent.
Alda. He has gone. He is passing now
Under the portico.

[*The* SLAVE *opens the grating, closes it furtively behind her, and disappears into the garden.*]

Francesca. Be silent, be silent!

[*She turns, covering her face with both her hands; when she withdraws them, her face appears transfigured. She goes down the first stairs slowly, then with a sudden rapidity throws herself into the arms of her sister, who awaits her at the foot of the staircase.*]

Altichiara. Messer Ostasio is coming back alone.
Biancofiore. The slave, where is she going? She is running
Down through the garden.
Garsenda. Smaragdi runs and runs
Like a hound unleashed. Where is she going?
Adonella. Sing
Together, sing the song of the fair Isotta:
"O date, O leafy date! . . ."

[*The* WOMEN *form into a circle on the loggia.*]

Chorus of Women.
O date, O leafy date.
O love, O lovely love,
What wilt thou do to me?

[FRANCESCA, *held close in her sister's arms, suddenly begins to weep. The chorus breaks off. The* WOMEN *speak together in low voices.*]

Biancofiore. Madonna weeps.
Adonella. She weeps!
Alda. Why does she weep?
Altichiara. She weeps because her heart is sick with joy.
Garsenda. Straight to the heart
He wounded her. If she is beautiful,
He is beautiful, the Malatesta!
Adonello. Born
One for the other
Under one star.
Garsenda. O happy he and she!
Alda. Long may he live who crowns
Their heads with garlands!
Biancofiore.
First rain of the season
To the corn brings increase;
And the first tears of love
To the lover bring peace.
Adonella. She smiles, she smiles
Now.
Biancofiore. And her tears
Laugh like the hoar-frost.
Garsenda. Go, warm the bath,
Get the combs ready.

[*The* WOMEN *scatter over the loggia, with their garments fluttering, nimble as birds on the bough, while the tall staves of their distaffs pass and repass, shaken like torches against the blue strip of the sky. Some go into the rooms and come out again. Others stand as if watching. And they talk in subdued voices and they move without sound of footsteps.*]

Biancofiore. These smelling-bottles
Of bright new silver
We have to fill
With water of orange flower and water of roses.
Alda. We have to fill
Four mighty coffers
With sheets of linen fringed with silken lace.
Altichiara. And stores of pillows
We have wrought for a marvel.
We have wrought so many
That never in dreams the people of Rimino
Have seen such store!
Adonella. Ah, we have much to be doing!
Garsenda. And we must fold the quilts
Of cloth of linen

And all the embroidered coverlets of gold.
Biancofiore. And count the nets and ribbons for the hair
And all the girdles and the belts of gold.
Adonella. We have much to be doing!
Garsenda. I take my oath
A better dowry brings to Malatesta
The daughter of Messer Guido than the daughter
Of Boemondo, King of Servia,
To the Doge of Venice.
Adonella. And if she go by sea we have store enough
Of oil and lavender
To perfume all the sea.
Alda. And we will teach the women
Of Rimino, that are a little raw,
The art of odours.
Biancofiore. And the art of playing
And of singing and of dancing.
Altichiara. O, I forgot
That I have yet to put a patch of scarlet
On the jerkin of Gian Figo.
He comes again at noonday.
Biancofiore. He will do well to finish
The story of Morgana and the shield,
And of the magic potion.
Alda. Hey, hey, the wedding in May!
The table must be laid for thirty dishes
And for a hundred trenchers.
Biancofiore. We must bring word
To Mazarello
To have the music ready.
Adonella. Ah, we have much to be doing!
Garsenda. Hey, hey, to work, to work!
Adonella. Come, lay our distaffs down
And take our garlands up.

[*They go into the room with a murmur, like a swarm of bees into the hive.* FRANCESCA *has raised her head, and her tears are suddenly lit up by a smile. While the* WOMEN *on the loggia were chattering in a low voice among themselves, she wiped the tears from her face and the face of her sister with her fingers. Now she speaks, and her first words are heard through the last words of the* WOMEN.]

Francesca. O sister, sister,
Weep no more. Now I weep no more. See now,
I am smiling. Tears and smiles
Are not enough now. Close
And narrow is the heart to hold this power,
And weeping is a virtue all outspent,
And laughter is a little idle play;
And all my life seems now,
With all the veins of it,
And all the days of it,
And all old things in it, far away things,
From long ago in the old time, the blind
And silent time, when I
Was but an infant on my mother's breast,
And you were not,
Seems all to tremble
In one long shuddering
Over the earth;
And now through all the streams
That laugh and weep in the places
That I have never known,
The forces of my being are cast abroad;
And I hear the air cry with a terrible cry,
And I hear the light
Sound like a trumpet-peal,
And the shouting that I hear
And the tumult cry out louder than the sound
In days of vengeance, sister, when the blood
Colours the portals of our father's house.
Samaritana. O Francesca, my Francesca, O dear soul,
What have you seen? What is it you have seen?
Francesca. No, do not be afraid!
What is it your eyes speak?
What sickness am I stricken with, and what,
What have I seen?
It is life runs away,
Runs away like a river,
Ravening, and yet cannot find its sea;
And the roar is in my ears.
But you, but you,
Take me, dear sister, take me with you now,
And let me be with you!
Carry me to my room,
And shut the shutters fast.
And give me a little shade,
And give me a draught of water,
And lay me down upon your little bed,
And with a covering cover me and make
A silence of the shouting, make a silence
Of the shouting and the tumult
I hear within my soul!
Bring stillness back to me,
That I may hear again
The bees of May

Beat on the window, and the cry of the swallows,
And some of your soft words,
Your words of yesterday,
Your words of long ago
And long ago,
Out of an hour that comes to me again
Like an enchantment.
And hold me close, dear sister,
And hold me close to you!
And we will wait for night,
Night with its prayer and sleep,
Sister; and for the morning we will wait
That brings that morning-star.

Garsenda [*rushing in upon the loggia*]. He is coming, he is coming!
O Madonna
Francesca! see he is coming by the way
Of the garden. I have seen him from the room
Of the coffers, I have seen him
Under the cypresses. Smaragdi shows him
The way.

[*The* WOMEN *join her, curious and mirthful; and they have garlands on their heads for joy: and they have with them three* GIRLS, *lute-players and viol-players and flute-players.*]

Francesca [*white with fear, and beside herself*].
No, no, no! Run,
Run, women, run!
Let him not come! Run, run!
Women, go out to meet him,
Let him not come! Shut to
The gates, and bar the way, and say to him
Merely that I salute him! and you, you,
Samaritana, help me,
Because I cannot fly; but my knees fail
And my sight fails me.
But you, my women, run,
Run now, and meet him,
And bid him turn again! Go out to meet him,
And say that I salute him!

The Women. He is here!
He is here, he is here at hand!

[*Aided by her sister,* FRANCESCA *is about to go up the stairs; but suddenly she sees* PAOLO MALATESTA, *close to her, on the other side of the marble screen. She stands motionless, and he stops, in the midst of the arbutuses; and they stand facing one another, separated by the railing, looking at one another, without word or movement. The* SLAVE *is hidden behind the leaves. The* WOMEN *on the loggia form, in a circle, and the* PLAYERS *sound their instruments.*]

Chorus of Women.
Over the land of May.
The archer with his band
Goes out to seek his prey.
At a feast of fears,
In a far-off land,
A heart sighs with tears.

[FRANCESCA *leaves her sister and goes slowly towards the sarcophagus. She picks a large red rose, and offers it to* PAOLO MALATESTA *across the bars.* SAMARITANA *with bowed head goes up the stairs weeping. The women take up the song. At the barred window, at the back,* BANNINO *appears, with his face bandaged; then drawing back, he beats at the door closed by* OSTASIO. FRANCESCA *trembles.*]

The Voice of Bannino. Francesca, open, Francesca!

ACT TWO

A cross-shaped room, in the house of the Malatesti, with projecting side beams and strong pillars, two of which, at the back, support an arch which leads through a narrow closed entrance between two walls pierced by loopholes, to the platform of a round tower. Two side staircases of twelve steps run from the entrance to the leads of the tower; a third staircase, between the two, runs from the leads to the floor underneath, passing through a trap-door. Through the archway are seen the square battlements of the Guelfs, provided with block-houses and openings for pouring down molten lead. A huge catapult lifts its head out of its supports and stretches out its framework of twisted ropes. Heavy crossbows, with largeheaded, short, and square bolts, balistas, arcobalistas, and other rope-artillery, are placed around, with their cranks, pulleys, wheels, wires, and levers. The summit of the tower, crowned with engines and arms that stand out in the murky air, overlooks

the city of Rimino, where can be dimly seen the wing-shaped battlements of the highest Ghibelline tower. On the right of the room is a door; on the left, a narrow fortified window looking out on the Adriatic.

In the closed entrance is seen a MAN-AT-ARMS *stirring the fire under a smoking cauldron. He has piled against the wall the tubes, syphons and poles of the fiery staves and darts, and heaped about them all sorts of prepared fires. On the tower, beside the catapult, a young* ARCHER *stands on guard.*

Man-At-Arms. The meadow of the Commune is still empty?
Archer. As clean and polished as my buckler.
Man-At-Arms. Still not a soul stirring!
Archer. Not the shadow even
Of a Gambancerro or of an Omodeo.
Man-At-Arms. They seem then to be dead already, those
That have to die.
Archer. Quite otherwise than dead!
If all we did not buckle breastplates well,
And if the gates were not cross-bolted fast,
You would soon hear a hammering of hearts
In the regions about Rimino. . . . Ah, there goes
A donkey.
Man-At-Arms. It is Messer Montagna, eh?
Of the Parcitadi, or Messer Ugolino
Cignatta.
Archer. Both of them, by Berlingerio,
Stand with the right foot ready
In the stirrup of the crossbow, for the sign
To come out and to face the bolts and bars.
Man-At-Arms. What sign? The Parcitade
Lacks his astrologer. He waits and hopes
For succour from Urbino.
But long before Count Guido comes to us,
By the body of San Giulian the martyr,
We shall have burnt the city to the ground.
We have enough to do with burning down
Half of Romagna. 'Tis warm work this time,
I warrant you! The Lamester
Wanted to singe his horse's mane with one
Of these fire-bearers:
Sure sign we are in salamander weather.
Archer. He loves the stench of singeing, it would seem,
More than the civet of his wedded wife,
That woman of Ravenna! another thing
Than firebrands or this sulphur and bitumen!
A smile of hers would set the city alight
And all the country and the territory.
Man-At-Arms. She smiles but little. She is always overcast
With thinking, and with anger. She is restless.
I see her almost every day come up
Upon this tower. She scarcely speaks. She watches
The sea, and if she sees
Some galley or some frigate on the sea,
She follows it with her eyes
(Blacker than pitch, her eyes!)
Until it fades away,
As if she waited for a message or
Longed to set sail. She goes
From tower to tower,
From the Mastra to the Rubbia,
And from the Gemmana to the Tanaglia,
Like a lost swallow. And sometimes I fear,
When she is on the platform,
That she will take a flying leap and fall.
Misericordia!
Archer. The Lamester is well made
To ride astride upon the Omodeo,
To batter strongholds, and to ford the streams,
And to force palisades,
To plunder and to pillage all the earth,
But not to labour in the lovely vineyard
That God has given him.
Man-At-Arms. Hush! You must not speak
So loud; we should not hear him if he came.
He goes about more softly than a panther,
You cannot hear him when he comes. He makes
A goodly pair with Messer Malatestino,
That comes upon you always suddenly
Without your knowing how or whence he came,
And gives you the same start,
Always, as if you had come upon a ghost.
Archer. This is the day we are to lay about us.
The women will be all shut up.
Man-At-Arms. This one
Is not a lady to be frightened. Look,
See what is stirring.
Archer [*returning to his post*]. I see the friars,
The hermits of Sant' Agostino, pass
To the exorcising. I can smell the stench

Of singeing in the cool air.
Man-At-Arms. And the gate
Of the Gattalo is closed still?
Archer. Ay, closed still.
Our men, that had to come Verrucchio way,
Will be by now with trumpets and flags flying
At the bridge of the Maone. Messer Paolo
Came with the infantry by the postern gate
Of the sea.
Man-At-Arms. The mixture now
Is ready brewed. Since midday I have stirred
The ladle, mixed and moulded it together.
We are to sling barrels and casks of it
Upon the excommunicated houses.
But what is it we wait for? The conjunction
Of Mars with Venus? This astrologer,
Come from Baldach, does not quite seem to me
A modern Balaam. God be on our side!
Look if you see him now
Upon the belfry of Santa Colomba.
He is to ring the bell three times, to say
The fates are in our favour.
Archer. I can see
A great long beard.
Man-At-Arms. May he be tarred all over with his tow,
And brayed in a mortar! I suspect him.
He was with Ezelino at Padua,
And other of hell's own Ghibellines. I know not
Why Messer Malatesta
Keeps in his company.
Archer. Guido Bonatto, of Forlì, I know
To be a true astrologer of battles.
I saw him on the great day of Valbona,
And his prognostic never faulted.
Man-At-Arms. Now
The cursed Feltran has him. Thunder strike
His eyesight and his astrolabe!

[Francesca *enters by the door on the right, and advances as far as the pillar that supports the arch. She wears about her face a dark band that passes under her chin and joins a kind of skull-cap that covers her hair, leaving visible the tresses knotted on her neck.*]

Archer. The dust
Begins to rise over toward Aguzano.
Man-At-Arms. Are they Count Guido's horsemen
That ought to come from Petramala?
Archer. No.
May God cast down their eyes
Out of their visors into the dust!
Man-At-Arms. But who,
Who are they?
Francesca. Berlingerio!
Man-At-Arms [*starting*]. O, Madonna Francesca!

[The Archer *remains silent and stares at her blankly, leaning on the catapult.*]

Francesca. Messer Giovanni
Is at the Mastra yet?
Man-At-Arms. Not yet, Madonna. We expect him now.
Francesca. And no one else?
Man-At-Arms. Yes, Messer Malatesta,
The old man. He himself it was who made
The mixing in the cauldron; and I am here
Since midday with this ladle, stirring it.
Francesca [*going nearer*]. And no one else?
Man-At-Arms. And no one else, Madonna.
Francesca. What are you doing here?
Man-At-Arms. Making Greek fire,
Distaffs and staves and spouts and lines and pots
And fiery darts, and much
Other caresses for the Parcitadi,
Because we trust to come to blows to-day
And give them from this quarter what shall prove
A good part-payment of their coming hell.
Francesca [*looking wonderingly at the boiling mass in the cauldron*]. Greek fire! Who can escape it? I have never
Seen it before. Tell me, is it not true
That there is nothing known so terrible
In battles for a torture?
Man-At-Arms. This is indeed most terrible; 'tis a secret
That Messer Malatesta
Had from an aged man of Pisa, who
Was with the Christians at the famous taking
Of Damiata.
Francesca. Tell me, is it true
That it flames in the sea,
Flames in the stream,
Burns up the ships,
Burns down the towers,
Stifles and sickens,
Drains a man's blood in his veins,
Straightway, and makes

Of his flesh and his bones
A little black ashes,
Draws from the anguish
Of man the wild cry of the beast,
That it maddens the horse,
Turns the valiant to stone?
Is it true that it shatters
The rock, and consumes
Iron, and bites
Hard to the heart
Of a breastplate of diamond?
Man-At-Arms. It bites and eats
All kinds of things that are, living and dead;
Sand only chokes it out,
But also vinegar
Slacks it.
Francesca. But how do you
Dare, then, to handle it?
Man-At-Arms. We have the license
Of Beelzebub, that is the prince of devils,
And comes to take the part
Of the Malatesti.
Francesca. How do you scatter it?
Man-At-Arms. With tubes and syphons
Of a long range; or at the point of pikes
With distaffs full of flax
We shoot it by the help of our balistas.
See here, Madonna, these are very good
Distaffs; they are
The distaffs of the Guelfs
That without spindle weave the death of men.

[*He takes up a staff prepared for the fire and shows it to* Francesca, *who takes it by the handle and shakes it vehemently.*]

Francesca. Light one for me.
Man-At-Arms. The signal is not yet
Given.
Francesca. I would have you light this one for me.
Man-At-Arms. Who is to put it out?
Francesca. O, I must see
The flame that I have never seen as yet.
Light it! Is it not true that when you light it
It darts marvellous colours, like no other
Creature of flight,
Colours of such a mingling that the eye
Cannot endure them,
Of an unspeakable
Variety, innumerable
In fervour and in splendour, that alone
Live in the wandering planets and within
The vials of alchemists,
And in volcanoes full of many metals,
And in the dreams of blind men? Is it true?
Man-At-Arms. In very deed, Madonna,
It is a beautiful and pleasant thing
To see at night these lighted distaffs fly
And light upon a camp
Of the imperial ragamuffianry;
And that knows well Messer Giovanni, your
Good husband, who takes pleasure to behold it.
Francesca. Light it, then, Man-At-Arms! for I must see it.
Man-At-Arms. 'Tis not yet night, nor is the signal given.
Francesca. Light it! I bid you.
And I will hide myself here in the dark
To see it, by the stairway leading down,
Where it is darker.
Man-At-Arms. Do you want to burn
The tower with all the archers,
And please the Parcitade folk?

[Francesca *dips the fiery staff into the cauldron, then rapidly lights it with a firebrand.*]

Francesca. And I
Light it!

[*The violent and many-coloured flame crackles at the point of the pike that she holds in her hand like a torch, fearlessly.*]

O, fair flame, conqueror of day!
Ah, how it lives, how it lives vibrating,
The whole staff vibrates with it, and my hand
And my arm vibrate with it, and my heart.
I feel it nearer me
Than if I held it in my palm. Wouldst thou
Devour me, fair flame, wouldst thou make me thine?
I feel that I am maddening for thee.

[*Her voice rises like a song. The* Man-At-Arms *and the* Archer *gaze in astonishment at the flame and the woman, as at some work of sorcery.*]

And how it roars!
It roars to seek its prey.
It roars and longs for flight;
And I would fling it up into the clouds.
Come, charge the arbalest.
The sun is dead, and this,
This is the daughter that he had of death.
O, I would fling it up into the clouds.
Why do you linger? No, I am not mad,

No, no, poor Man-At-Arms, who look at me
In wonderment.
[*She laughs.*]
No, but this flame is so
Beautiful, I am drunk with it. I feel
As I were in the flame and it in me.
You, you, do you not see how beautiful,
How beautiful it is? The bitter smoke
Has spoilt your eyes for seeing. If it shines
So gloriously by day, how will it shine
By night?
[*She approaches the trap-door through which the stairs go down into the tower, and lowers the burning staff into the darkness.*]
A miracle! A miracle!
Man-At-Arms. Madonna, God preserve us, you will burn
The whole tower down.
Madonna, I pray you!
[*He hastily draws back out of the way of sparks the staves prepared for fire which are lying about.*]
Francesca [*intent on the light*]. It is a miracle!
It is the joy of the eyes, and the desire
Of splendour and destruction. In the heart
Of silence of this high and lonely mount
Shall I spread forth these gems of frozen fire,
That all the terror of the flame unloose
And bring to birth new ardours in the soul?
Tremendous life of swiftness, mortal beauty!
Swift through the night, swift through the starless night,
Fall in the camp, and seize the armèd man,
Enswathe his sounding armour, glide between
Strong scale and scale, hunt down
The life of veins, and break
The bones asunder, suck the marrow out,
Stifle him, rend him, blind him, but before
The final darkness falls upon his eyes,
Let all the soul within him without hope
Shriek in the splendour that is slaying him.
[*She listens in the direction of the trap-door.*]
Some one is coming up the stairs here. Who
Is coming?
Man-At-Arms. On each floor
We have a hundred men,
Archers and those that work the manganels,
Hidden, and bidden not to move or breathe,
Crammed in together like a sheaf of arrows
Inside a quiver. Perhaps
They saw the flame.
Francesca. It is one man alone.
His armour clanks upon him.
Who is it coming?
Man-At-Arms. Lift up the staff, turn it away, Madonna
Francesca, it is surely not an enemy.
Or you are like to burn him in the face.
Perhaps it is Messer Giovanni.
Francesca [*bending over the opening*]. Who are you?
Who are you?
The Voice of Paolo. Paolo!
[Francesca *is silent; she draws back the fiery staff, and the flame, heightened by the sudden movement, lights up the helmet and gorgerin of* Paolo Malatesta. Paolo *appears, up to the waist, in the opening of the stairs, and turns to* Francesca, *who has moved back against the wall, still holding in her hand the iron handle of the staff, which she has lowered to the ground, so that the fire burns perilously near her feet. The* Archer *has returned to his post.*]
Man-At-Arms. You have come just in time, Messer Paolo, just
In time, for all we here
Were like to have been roasted living, we
And all the towers along with us. You see:
Madonna plays
With the Greek fire
As if she held
A lap-dog in a leash.
[Francesca, *pale and leaning against the wall, laughs with a troubled laugh, letting the staff fall from her hand.*]
It is a miracle
That we are not all here in open hell.
You see!
[*He pours sand on the flame in order to extinguish it.* Paolo *runs up the remaining steps; as he sets foot on the platform of the tower, the* Archer *points towards the city, to show where the battle is beginning.*]
Archer. There is tumult in the San Cataldo quarter.
It is breaking out at the Membruto bridge

Over the Patara trench.
And they are fighting at the fullers' mill
Under the gun tower, there, by the Masdogna.

[Francesca *moves away, stepping uncertainly among the arrows and engines heaped around, and goes towards the door by which she had come; she pauses by the pillar that hides her from the eyes of* Paolo.]

Man-At-Arms. We are still waiting
For the signal, Messer Paolo.
It is almost vespers. What are we to do?

[Paolo *does not seem to hear, possessed by a single thought, a single anguish. Seeing* Francesca *has gone, he leaves the tower, and goes down one of the little side staircases to rejoin her.*]

Paolo. Francesca!
Francesca. Give the signal. Paolo, give
The signal! Do not fear
For me, Paolo. Let me stay here and hear
The twanging of the bows.
I cannot breathe
When I am shut into my room, among
My trembling women, and I know there is fighting
Out in the city. I would have you give me,
My lord and kinsman, a fair helmet.
Paolo. I
Will give you one.
Francesca. Have you come from Cesena?
Paolo. I came to-day.
Francesca. You stayed
A long while there.
Paolo. It took us forty days
With Guido di Monforte in the field
To take Cesena and the castle.
Francesca. Ah!
You have toiled, I think, too much.
You are a little thinner and a little
Paler, it seems to me.
Paolo. There is an Autumn fever
Among the thickets on the Savio.
Francesca. No,
But you are sick? You tremble. And Orabile,
Has she no medicine for you?
Paolo. This fever
Feeds on itself; I ask no medicine,
I seek no herb to heal my sickness, sister.
Francesca. I had a healing herb
When I was in my father's house, the house
Of my good father, God protect him, God
Protect him! I had a herb, a healing herb,
There in the garden where you came one day
Clothed in a garment that is called, I think,
Fraud, in the gentle world;
But you set foot on it, and saw it not,
And it has never come up any more,
However light your foot may be, my lord
And kinsman. It was dead.
Paolo. I saw it not,
I knew not where I was,
Nor who had led my feet into that way,
I did not speak, I did not hear a word,
I had no bounds to cross,
No barriers to break down,
I only saw a rose
That offered itself up to me more living
Than the lips of a fresh wound, and a young song
I heard in the air, and I heard angry blows
Beaten upon a loud and terrible door,
And I heard an angry voice that cried your name
In anger. Only that, nothing but that.
Nor from that way did I come back by will
Of coming back;
Because the ways of death
Are not so secret as that other way,
O sister, if God wills.
Francesca. I also saw
With my own eyes the dawn,
The dawn that brings with it the morning star,
The nurse of the young heavens,
That had but newly waked to give its milk
When the last dream of sleep
Came to my pillow; and I also saw,
With my own eyes I saw,
With horror and with shame,
About me as it were an impure stream
Of water flung suddenly outraging
A palpitating face
Lifted to drink the light.
This did I see with my own eyes; and this
I shall see always till the night has fallen,
The night that has no dawn,
Brother.
Paolo. The shame and horror be on me!
The light that came again
Found me awake.
Peace had forever fled
Out of the soul of Paolo Malatesta;
It has not come again, it will not come
Ever again;

Peace and the soul of Paolo Malatesta
Are enemies from now in life or death.
And all things were as enemies to me
From the hour that you set foot
Upon the threshold, and without escape,
And I turned back and followed with the guide.
Violent deeds
Were the one medicine for my disease,
That night: violent deeds.
And then I killed Tindaro Omodei
And burned his roofs about him.
I gave to the harsh guide another prey.
Francesca. God shall forgive you this,
God shall forgive you all the blood you shed,
And all the rest,
But not the tears I did not weep, but not
The eyes that were still dry when the dawn came.
I cannot weep now, brother! Another draught
You gave me at the ford
Of the beautiful river, do you remember it?
With your false heart,
Filled full with madness and with treachery,
That was the last, that was the last that quenched
My thirst; and now no water
Can quench my thirst, not any more, my lord.
And then we saw the walls of Rimino,
And then we saw the Galeana gate,
And the sun was going down upon the hills,
And all the horses neighed against the walls,
And then I saw your face,
Silent, between the spears
Of the horsemen. And a wicked thing it was
That you did not let me drift upon the stream,
That would have taken me and laid me down
Softly upon the seashore of Ravenna,
And some one would have found me, and brought me back
To my good father, to my most kind father
That without thought of wrong had given me
To whom he would, yes, without thought of wrong;
God have him in his keeping, give him always
More and more lordship!
Paolo. Your rebuke, Francesca,
Is cruel over-much, sweet over-much,
And my heart melts within me, and my sad soul
Is shed before the strangeness of your voice.
My soul is shed before you,
All that is in me have I cast away,
And I will no more stoop to pick it up.
How would you have me die?
Francesca. Like to the galley-slave
Rowing in the galley that is called Despair,
So would I have you die; and there and then
The memory of that draught
You gave me at the ford
Of the beautiful river,
Before we had come to the water of treachery
And to the walls of fraud, should burn in you
And should consume you. My brother in God,
In the Most High God,
And in Saint John, better it were for you
That you should lose your life than stain your soul.

[*The bells of Santa Colomba are heard. Both shiver as if returning to consciousness.*]

Ah! where are we? Who is it calling us?
Paolo. What hour is that?
What are you doing?

[*The* Man-At-Arms *and the* Archer, *busy loading the balistas and cocking the fiery staves, start at the sound.*]

Man-At-Arms. The signal! It is the signal!
It is the bells of Santa Colomba!
Archer. Fire!
Fire! Long live Malatesta!

[*A troop of* Archers *hurry shouting up through the trap-door, and through the platform of the tower, and seize weapons and engines.*]

Archers. Long live Messer Malatesta and the Guelfs!
Down with Messer Parcitade and the Ghibellines!

[*On the battlements is a great sheaf of fiery staves, which glows in the dusky air.* Paolo Malatesta *takes his helmet from his head and gives it to* Francesca.]

Paolo. Here is the helmet that I have to give you.

Francesca. Paolo!

[PAOLO *rushes upon the tower. His bare head overtops the* MEN-AT-ARMS *as they work.* FRANCESCA, *throwing down the helmet, follows, calling to him through the noise and clamour.*]

Paolo. Give me a crossbow!

Francesca. Paolo! Paolo!

Paolo. A bow! A crossbow!

Francesca. Paolo! Paolo!

[*An* ARCHER *is knocked over by a bolt which takes him in the throat.*]

Man-At-Arms. Madonna, get you gone, for God's sake; now
They are beginning here to bite the leads.

[*Some* ARCHERS *raise their large painted shields in the way of* FRANCESCA *as she tries to follow* PAOLO.]

Archers. The Galeana Tower is answering!
Cignatta's men are coming
By the Masdogna!
Long live Messer Malatesta and the Guelfs!
Verrucchio! Verrucchio!

[FRANCESCA *tries to get past the* ARCHERS, *who stop her way.*]

Man-At-Arms. Madonna,
By any God you worship! Messer Paolo,
Pay a little heed here! Here is Madonna Francesca
Out in the open. It is death here.

[PAOLO, *snatching a crossbow, stands on the rampart, firing furiously, in full view of the enemy, like a madman.*]

Francesca. Paolo!

[PAOLO *turns at the cry, and sees the woman in the glare of the fires. He snatches a shield from one of the* ARCHERS *and covers her.*]

Paolo. Ah, Francesca, go, go! What is this madness?

[*He pushes her toward shelter, holding the shield over her; she gazes at his angry and beautiful face from under the shield.*]

Francesca. You
Are the madman! You are the madman!

Paolo. And was I not to die?

[*He leads her back to shelter and throws down the shield, still holding the crossbow.*]

Francesca. Not now, not now,
It is not yet the hour.

Archers. —Malatesta! Malatesta!
—Cignatta's men are there, under the Rubbia!
—This side, this side!

[*They come down by the stairs on the left and set the crossbows to the arrow-slits in the walls. The bells ring in all directions. A distant sound of trumpets is heard.*]

—Verrucchio! Down with the Parcitade! Death
To the Ghibelline!
—Long live Messer Malatesta!
Long live the Guelfs!

Paolo. This is the hour, if you will see me die,
If you will lift my head out of the dust
With your two hands. What other could I have?
I will not die the death of the galley-slave.

Francesca. Paolo, steel your heart against your fate,
Be silent as that day
Under the heavy guidance, as that day
Among the spears of the spearmen. And let me not
Stain my own soul for your sake!

Paolo. Ay, to play
With fate is what I will,
Is what my false heart wills,
Filled full of madness and of treachery.

[*With an impetuous gesture he draws her towards the fortified window, and puts into her hand the cord that hangs from the portcullis.*]

Throw the portcullis open!
A child's hand opens it,
The mere touch of an innocent hand.

[*He gathers a bundle of arrows and throws them at the feet of* FRANCESCA. *Then he loads the crossbow.*]

Francesca. Ah, madman!
Madman! And do you think
My hand will tremble? Do you think to tempt
My soul after this fashion? I am ready
For any mortal game men play with fate,
Knowing I shall not lose,

Seeing that all is lost.
But you now stand
Upon tremendous limits, where God help you!
I open for you. See!
Look straight before you,
And take the sign, if you would not have me laugh.

[*She pulls the portcullis open with the cord, and through the opening is seen the open sea, shining under the last rays of light.*]

The sea! The sea!

[PAOLO *aims the crossbow and fires.*]

Paolo. A good stroke! It is gone
Through neck and neckpiece.
That's my good forerunner
In the land of darkness!

[FRANCESCA *lowers the portcullis, and the return arrow is heard against it.* PAOLO *reloads the crossbow.*]

Archers [*on the tower*].—Victory!
Victory! Death, death to the Parcitadi!
Long live Messer Malatesta and the Guelfs!
—Victory! Victory! the Ghibelline is broken
At the Patara bridge.
—The fullers' mill is empty!
—Messer Giovanni galloping with the spears
At the Gattolo gate! Cignatta scampering!
—Be careful not to wound
Our own folk in the fray!
—Victory to Malatesta!

Francesca [*in great emotion*].
I have seen the sea,
The eternal sea,
The witness of the Lord,
And on the sea a sail
That the Lord set to be a sign of saving.
Paolo, brother of God,
I make a vow
If the Lord of mercy
Have you in keeping!

Paolo. Raise the portcullis up!

Francesca. I will not let it down again.
This hazard
Shall be God's judgment, this judgment of the arrow.
Man is deceit, but God is very truth.
Brother in God, the stain of fraud you have
Upon your soul,
Let it be pardoned to you with all love,
And let the judgment of God
Make proof of you
Now by the arrow
That it touch you not;
Or it were better
That you give your life,
And I with you.

[*Holding the tightened cord in her hand she kneels and prays, with her wide-open eyes fixed on* PAOLO's *unarmed head. Through the raised portcullis can be seen the shining sea.* PAOLO *loads and fires the crossbow without a pause. From time to time* GHIBELLINE *missiles enter by the window and strike on the opposite wall or fall on the pavement without wounding him. The cruel suspense convulses the face of the woman in prayer. The syllables hardly form themselves on her parted lips.*]

Our Father which art in heaven,
Hallowed be thy name,
Thy Kingdom come,
Thy will be done in earth
As it is in heaven.
Father, give us this day
Our daily bread.

[PAOLO, *having failed in several shots, takes aim more carefully, as if for a master-stroke. He fires; a clamour is heard among the enemy.*]

Paolo [*with fierce delight*]. Ah, Ugolino, I have found you out!

Francesca. And forgive us our debts, as we
Forgive our debtors.
And lead us not
Into temptation,
But deliver us from evil.
So be it, Amen.

[*Meanwhile there is great rejoicing among the* ARCHERS *on the tower. Some carry the killed and wounded down through the trap-door.*]

Archers.—Victory to Malatesta!
—Death to the Parcitadi and the Ghibellines!
Montagna's men are flying
By the San Cataldo gate.—See, see, the fire
Is spreading. There's a powder-barrel burst
Over the house of Accarisio. See,
The fire is spreading!—Victory! Malatesta!
—Ah, Messer Ugolino

Cignatta has fallen from his horse. He is dead!
—A bolt from a crossbow took him in the mouth.
Who was it killed him? Was it Bartolo Gambitta?
—Who, who killed him? One of ours?
A splendid stroke!
—Deserves a hundred lire,
A thousand golden crowns!—Victory! Victory!

[*A shaft grazes the head of* PAOLO MALATESTA, *passing through his hair.* FRANCESCA *utters a cry, letting go the cord; starting to her feet, she takes his head in her hands, feeling for the wound. A mortal pallor overspreads his face at the touch. The crossbow falls at his feet.*]

Francesca. Paolo! Paolo!

[*She looks at her hands to see if they are stained with blood. They are white. She again searches anxiously.*]

O, what is this? Oh, God!
Paolo! Paolo! You are not bleeding, and you have
No single drop of blood upon your head,
Yet you look deathly. Paolo!
Paolo [*in a choking voice*]. I am not dying,
Francesca. Iron has not touched me.
Francesca. Saved!
O saved and pure! Cleansed utterly of fraud!
Give thanks to God! Kneel, brother!
Paolo. But your hands
Have touched me, and the soul
Has fainted in my heart, and icy cold
Takes hold on all my veins, and no more strength
Is in me now to live;
But of this other life
That comes to meet me—
Francesca. Kneel, kneel, on your life!
Paolo. Ah! an unspeakable fear takes hold on me,
And a scorn deeper even than the fear——
Francesca. Kneel! Kneel!
Paolo. Since I have lived
With such an infinite force,
Fighting apart, yet ever on the lonely
Height of your prayer,
And in the fiery solitude of your eyes——
Francesca. Kneel! Kneel! Give thanks to God!
I will not lose you now over again!
Paolo. Fighting apart, and slaying
Men——
Francesca. You are pardoned now,
And you are cleansed, and yet you will be lost!
Paolo. And all my courage drawn
Vehemently about my angry heart,
And all within me now
The power of my most evil love sealed up.
Francesca. Lost! Lost! Say you are mad,
Say, on your life, that you are mad, and say
That your most wretched soul
Has heard no word of all your mouth has said!
By the arrow that passed by
And struck you not,
By the death that touched you with its finger-tip
And took you not,
Say that your life shall never, never speak
Those words again!
Archers. Long live Messer Giovanni Malatesta!

[GIOVANNI MALATESTA *comes up by the stairs of the Mastra Tower, armed from head to foot, and holding a Sardinian rod in his hand. He limps up the stairs, and, when he has reached the top, raises his terrible spear, while his harsh voice cuts through the clamour.*]

Gianciotto. By God, you craven creatures,
You cut-throat spawn,
I am well minded
To pitch you all headlong into the Ausa,
Like carrion that you are.
Francesca. Your brother!

[PAOLO *picks up the crossbow.*]

Gianciotto. You are more ready
To cry rejoicings
Than to belabour this tough Ghibelline hide.
How should you work your crossbows without sinews?
Had I not come to aid you with my horse,
Cignatta would have battered down your gates;
God break the arms of all of you for cowards!

Archers.—We had used almost all our stock of arrows.
—The Astrologer was late in signalling.
—We have silenced them on the Galassa tower.
—We have piled up a heap on the Masdogna.
Gianciotto. Poor fire, by God! There are not many houses
To be seen burning. Badly thrown, your fire.
Archers.—The house of Accarisio is still burning.
—And the good Cignatta, who unhorsed him then?
—It was one of us that slit his windpipe for him?
Gianciotto. Which one of you was standing at the window?
Archers.—Was not this one here something of the cut?
A thousand golden crowns to the company!
Gianciotto. Who was it at the window?
Archers.—We have been slaving on an empty stomach.
—We are dead with hunger and with thirst.
—Long live
Messer Gianciotto the never-satisfied!
[PAOLO *picks up his helmet, puts it on and goes towards the tower.* FRANCESCA *goes towards the door by which she had entered, opens it and calls.*]
Francesca. O Smaragdi! Smaragdi!
Gianciotto [*to the* ARCHERS]. Be silent there. Your tongues dry up in you!
No talking while you work: I like you silent.
But come now, there is a great cask to hurl;
I will teach you the right way of it; and I will send it
To the old Parcitade for leave-taking
In my good father's name. Here, Berlingerio,
Where is my brother Paolo?
Did he not come up here?
[*The* SLAVE *appears at the door; then, after an order from her mistress, disappears.* FRANCESCA *remains standing on the threshold.*]
Paolo. Here. I am here, Gianciotto. It was I
Who shot out of the window. The dumb thing
Struck through the throat of one whose mouth was open
To jest at you.
[*There is a murmur among the* ARCHERS.]
Gianciotto. Brother, much thanks for this.
[*He turns to the* MEN-AT-ARMS.]
So sure a shot must needs
Come from a Malatesta,
My braggart bowmen.
[*The* SLAVE *reappears with a jar and a cup.* FRANCESCA *comes forward.* GIANCIOTTO *comes down towards his brother.*]
Paolo, I bring you news,
Good news.
[*He sees his wife. His voice changes to a gentler tone.*]
Francesca!
Francesca. All hail, my lord; you bring the victory.
[*He goes up to her and embraces her.*]
Gianciotto. Dear lady, why are you in such a place?
[*She draws back from the embrace.*]
Francesca. You have blood upon your armour.
Gianciotto. Have I painted you?
Francesca. You are all over dust.
Gianciotto. Lady, the dust
Is bread to me.
Francesca. You are not wounded?
Gianciotto. Wounds?
I feel none.
Francesca. But you must be thirsty.
Gianciotto. Yes,
I am very thirsty.
Francesca. Smaragdi, bring the wine.
[*The* SLAVE *comes forward with the jar and the cup.*]
Gianciotto [*with delighted surprise*]. What, my dear lady, you have taken thought
I might be thirsty? Why, you must have set
Your slave to watch for me, that you should know
My coming to the minute.
[FRANCESCA *pours out the wine and hands the cup to her husband.* PAOLO *stands aside in silence, watching the men who are preparing the fiery cask.*]

Francesca. Drink, it is wine of Scios.
Gianciotto. Drink first, I pray you.
A draught.
Francesca. I have not poisoned it, my lord.
Gianciotto. You laugh at me. Not for suspicion's sake,
But for the favour, for the favour of it,
Francesca, my true wife.
I have no fear of treachery from you.
My horse has not yet stumbled under me.
Drink, lady.
[FRANCESCA *touches the cup with her lips.*]
It is sweet,
After the fight, to see your face again,
To take a strong wine from your hands, and drink it
Down at a draught.
[*He empties the cup.*]
So. Why this warms my heart.
And Paolo? Where is Paolo?
Why has he not a word for you? He comes
Back from Cesena, and not
A word of welcome has my kinsman from you.
Paolo, come here. Are you not thirsty? Leave
Greek fire for Greek wine. Then
We will burn up the Parcitadi living!
Lady, pour out for him a cup brimful
And drink with him a draught, to do him honour;
And welcome him, welcome the perfect archer.
Francesca. I have already greeted him.
Gianciotto. But when?
Francesca. When he was shooting.
Paolo. Do you know, Gianciotto,
I came up on the tower
And found her in the act of making trial
With Berlingerio of a fiery dart?
Gianciotto. Is that the truth?
Paolo. She played
With lighted fire, and the poor man-at-arms
Was crying out for fear the tower should burn,
And she the while was laughing. I heard her laugh,
While the fire lay as gentle at her feet
As a greyhound in leash.
Gianciotto. Is that the truth,
Francesca?
Francesca. I was weary of my rooms
And of my whimpering women. And of a truth
I had rather look, my lord, on open war
Than feed fear closeted.
Gianciotto. Daughter of Guido,
Your father's seal is on you. May God make you
Fruitful to me, that you may give me many
And many a lion's cub!
[FRANCESCA *knits her brow.*]
Paolo, you have not drunk!
Drink, you are pale. Pour out a cup for him,
My woman warrior, full, and drink a draught.
He shot a splendid bolt.
Paolo. Do you know, Gianciotto,
Who lifted up the window while I shot?
She! In her hand she held the little cord
That lifts it, like the children of our soldiers;
And steady was her hand and firm her eye.
Gianciotto. Why, come then, come, my lady, and make war
Among the castles! I will make for you
A breastplate of fine gold, and you shall go
Riding with sword and spear,
Like the brave Countess Aldruda di Bertinoro,
When she went out to fight with Marchesella
Against the Councillor of Magonza. Ah!
You have been apart from me too long, dear lady.
Now with that dark band underneath your chin
And round your neck, you seem to wear a gorget:
It gives you a wild sort of grace. True, eh,
Paozzo? But you have not yet drunk! Drink, now.
Drink, you are pale. You have worked well. This night
We shall not sleep, two in our beds. So, lady,
Pour out the wine.
Francesca. See, I am pouring it.
Gianciotto. It is almost dark here; one can hardly see;
You might have spilt it.

Francesca. Drink, my lord and kinsman,
Out of the cup in which your brother drank.
God give you both good fortune,
Each as the other, and alike to me!
[PAOLO *drinks, looking straight into* FRANCESCA'S *eyes.*]
Gianciotto. Good fortune, Paolo.
I had begun to tell you, and I stopped;
I have happy tidings for you. In the hour
Of victory there came to our good father
Envoys from Florence, saying you are elected
The Captain of the People and the Commune
Of Florence.
Paolo. Envoys came!
Gianciotto. Why, yes. You are sorry?
Paolo. No, I will go.
[FRANCESCA *turns her face to the shadow and moves a few steps nearer the tower. The* SLAVE *retires to one side and stands motionless.*]
Gianciotto. You must go within three days.
You will have time to go to Ghiaggiolo
To your Orabile, who is used by now
To being a widow. And from there you will go
To the city of gay living that has thriven
Under the guidance of the joyous friars,
Full of fat merchants, and of merry-makers,
And gentry of the Court, and there the tables
Are spread both night and morning, and they dance there
And sing there, and you can sport to heart's content.
[*His face clouds over and he becomes bitter again.*]
We will stay here and set the trap for wolves
And slit the throats of lambkins. Iron shall knock
On iron for the pleasure of our ears,
Sardinian rod and hatchet of Orezzo
On bolt with rounded edge, morning and night
And night and morning. Here then we will wait
Till in some escalade another stone
Fracture another knee. And then, why, then,
Giovanni, the old Lamester, Gianni Ciotto,
Shall have himself tied tightly on the back
Of a stallion with the staggers, and so slung
Neck and crop ravaging down the ways of hell.
[FRANCESCA *moves restlessly to and fro in the shadow. Through the archway is seen the evening sky reddened by the flames.*]
Paolo. Giovanni, are you angry with me?
Gianciotto. No,
Did you not split the tongue of him who cried
His jests against me? "At him! At him! Ha!
The Lamester with the lovely wife!" cried out
Ugolino as he rode. His voice was loud:
Did it reach you at the window? I was there,
Eye upon eye, and stirrup against stirrup,
When your good shaft went straight
Into his snarling mouth,
And through, and out the back way of the head.
And yet you might have missed.
I felt the feathers of the arrow-shaft
Whistle against my face. You might have missed.
Paolo. But since I did not miss, why think of it?
Gianciotto. It is your way to run these sorts of risks.
At Florence be more cautious. You are going
To a hard post. Have sharp and rapid sight
But also prudent hand.
Paolo. Since you advise me,
Does it not seem to you, brother, as if
'Twere wiser let it go? We shall have need
Of all our forces here. The year is turning
Not over fortunately for the Guelfs,
Since the defeat of that Giovanni d'Appia
And the rebellion since in Sicily.
In favour of the Angevins.
Gianciotto. We must needs
Accept, and that without delay. You now
Shall be the keeper of the peace where once
Our mighty father was the Governor
Under King Charles, in the one great Guelf city

That prospers still. And so beyond the bounds
Of our Romagna shall the name of us
Sound high and spread abroad; and each of us
Shall follow where his rising star leads on.
I go my way, my sword has eyes for me;
My horse has not yet stumbled under me.
[*While he speaks,* MALATESTINO *is brought, wounded, down the stairs of the tower, between lighted torches, like a corpse. The shadow grows darker.*]
Francesca [*from the back*].
O, what is this? Horror! Do you not see
Malatestino, there, Malatestino,
The soldiers carrying him in their arms
Between the torches? They have killed his father!
[*She runs towards the* MEN, *who are coming down the side stairs, and passing through the midst of the* ARCHERS, *who leave off their work and make way in silence.* GIANCIOTTO *and* PAOLO *run forward.* ODDO DALLE CAMINATE *and* FOSCOLO D'OLNANG *are carrying the bleeding* YOUTH. *Four* ARCHERS *with long quivers accompany them with torches.*]
Francesca [*bending over the* YOUTH].
Malatestino! O God,
His eye is black with blood,
His eye is cut and torn. How have they killed him?
O, has his father seen it? Does he know?
[GIANCIOTTO *feels over his body and listens to his heart.*]
Gianciotto. Francesca, no, he is not dead! He breathes,
His heart is beating still. Do you not see?
He is coming to. The blow has struck him senseless;
But he is coming to.
The life is sound in him; he has good teeth
To keep it back from going. Courage, now!
Set him down gently here, here on this heap
Of ropes.
[*As the* BEARERS *are setting him down, the* YOUTH *begins to revive.*]
Oddo, how was it?
Oddo. From a stone
While they were scaling the Galassa tower.
Foscolo. All by himself he had made prisoner
Montagna Parcitade,
And bound him with his sword-belt, and led him back
To Messer Malatesta; and returned
To take the Tower.
Oddo. Just as he was, without
A visor to his helmet, heedlessly:
You know how hot he is!
Foscolo. And he was angry
Because his father would not suffer him
To cut the prisoner's throat.
[FRANCESCA *pours a few drops of wine between the lips of the* YOUTH. PAOLO *follows every movement greedily with his eyes.*]
Gianciotto [*looking at the wound*].
A stone out of the hand; not from a sling.
Come, it is nothing.
Lean as he is, he needs
Crow-bar and catapult to put him under.
This is a heart of metal, a tough liver.
He bears the sign of God now, as I do,
In warfare. He shall be
Named, from henceforth, as I am, by his scar.
[*He kisses him on the forehead.*]
Malatestino!
[*The* YOUTH *shakes himself and recovers consciousness.*]
Drink, Malatestino!
[*He drinks some of the wine, which* FRANCESCA *puts to his lips. Then he shakes his head, and is about to raise to his wounded left eye the hand still wearing its gauntlet.* FRANCESCA *prevents him.*]
Malatestino [*as if suddenly awaking, with violence*].
He will escape, I say. He is not safe
In prison. I tell you he will find a way
To escape presently. Father, give me leave
To cut his throat! I took him for you! Father,
Dear Father, let me kill him. I am sure
He will find a way to escape presently.
He is an evil one. Well, you then, give him
One hammer-stroke upon the head; one blow,
And he will turn upon himself three times.

Francesca. Malatestino, what do you see?
You are raving,
What do you see, Malatestino?
Oddo. Still
He is raging at Montagna.
Gianciotto. Malatestino, do you not know me? See,
You are on the Mastra Tower.
Montagna is in good clutches. Be assured
He will not run away from you.
Malatestino, Giovanni,
Where am I? O Francesca, and you too?
[*He again raises his hand to his eye.*]
What is the matter with my eye?
Gianciotto. A stone
That caught you in it.
FRANCESCA. Are you suffering much?
[*The* YOUTH *rises to his feet and shakes his head.*]
Malatestino. The stone-throw of a Ghibeline camp-follower
To make me suffer?
Come, come, there's no use now,
No time to weave new linen with old thread.
Put on a bandage, quick,
Give me to drink, and then
To horse, to horse!
[FRANCESCA *takes off the band that surrounds her chin and throat.*]
Gianciotto. Can you see?
Malatestino. One's enough for me.
Gianciotto. Try now
If the left one is lost.
[*He takes a torch from one of the* ARCHERS.]
Close your right eye. Francesca,
Put your hand over it. He has his gauntlet.
[*She closes his eyelid with her fingers.* GIANCIOTTO *puts the torch before his face.*]
Look! Do you see this torch?
Malatestino. No.
Gianciotto. Not a glimmer?
Malatestino. No, no!
[*He takes* FRANCESCA'S *wrist and pushes it away.*]
But I can see with one.
Archer [*excited by the* YOUTH'S *courage*].
Long live
Messer Malatestino! Malatesta!
Malatestino. To horse, to horse!
Giovanni, though the day is won, yet, yet,
Is not old Parcitade living still,
And waiting reinforcements? We must not
Be blinded. Oddo, Foscolo, the best
Is still to have.
Gianciotto [*turning to the* ARCHERS].
The cask! is the cask ready?
[*He goes towards the tower, to direct the operations of the catapult.*]
Oddo. You will fall half-way there.
Francesca. Stay, Malatestino,
Do not go back into the fight! Stay here,
And I will bathe and heal you. Run, Smaragdi,
Prepare the water and the linen; send
For Maestro 'Almodoro.
Malatestino. No, kinswoman,
Put on a bandage, quick,
And let me go. I will come back again
To find the doctor: bid the doctor wait.
I feel no pain at all.
But bandage me, I beg of you, kinswoman,
With the band that you have taken off your face.
Francesca. I will do the best I can for you, God knows,
But it will not be well done.
[*She binds up his eye. He observes* PAOLO, *who has not taken his eyes off* FRANCESCA.]
Malatestino. O, Paozzo,
What are you doing there? dreaming?
Francesca. 'Twill not
Be well done.
Malatestino. You have been elected Captain
Of the People at Florence. When I haled Montagna
Up to our father, bound, I saw the envoys,
The Guelfs of the Red Lily,
Who were with him then.
[*A guttural cry is heard as the* MEN *raise the cask upon the catapult. Above the battlements the glow of the fire spreads over the sky. The bells ring in all directions. Trumpets are heard.*]
They have shut up Montagna
In the sea prison. He will get away.
I begged my father, I begged him, on my knees,
To let me finish.
The envoys smiled. My father would not let me,
Because of them, I know,

To seem magnanimous. Another night
Montagna must not spend here. Will you help me?
Come to the prison! Have you done, kinswoman?
But do not tremble.

Francesca [*tying the knot*]. Yes, yes, but it is not well done. Your forehead
Is burning. You are feverish. Do not go,
Malatestino. Listen to me. Stay,
For God's sake!

Gianciotto [*on the tower*]. Heave it! Let it go!

[*The noise of the catapult is heard as it discharges the cask with its lighted fuses.*]

Archer. Long life
To Malatesta! Long life to the Guelfs!
Death to the Ghibellines and Parcitade!

Malatestino [*turning and running forward*]. To horse! to horse! to horse!

[Oddo, Foscolo, *and the* Archers *with their torches follow him.*]

[*The stage darkens. The reflection of the fire reddens the shadow in which* Paolo *and* Francesca *remain alone.*]

Paolo. Farewell, Francesca.

[*As he approaches her, she draws back with terror.*]

Gianciotto [*from the tower*]. Paolo! Paolo!

Francesca. Brother, farewell! Brother!

[Paolo *goes towards the Tower, from which the fiery staves are again being thrown.* Francesca, *left alone in the shadow, makes the sign of the cross and falls on her knees, bowing herself to the ground. At the back a still brighter illumination lights up the sky.*]

Archer. Fire! fire! Death to the Ghibellines! Fire! Death
To Parcitade and the Ghibellines!
Long live the Guelfs and long live Malatesta!

[*The fiery shafts are let fly through the battlements. The bells ring in all directions. The trumpets sound in the confusion of cries rising from the streets of the burning and blood-stained city.*]

ACT THREE

A room painted in fresco, elegantly divided into panels, portraying stories out of the romance of Tristan, between birds, beasts, flowers, and fruits. Under the moulding, around the walls, runs a frieze in the form of festoons, on which are written some words from a love-song:

"Meglio m'è dormire gaudendo
C'avere penzieri veghiando."

On the right is a beautiful alcove hidden by rich curtains; on the left a doorway covered by a heavy hanging; at the back a long window with many panes, divided by little columns, looking out on the Adriatic; a pot of basil is on the window-sill. Near the door, raised two feet above the floor, is a musicians' gallery, with compartments decorated with open carvings. Near the window is a reading desk, on which is open "The History of Launcelot of the Lake," composed of large illuminated pages, firmly bound together by thin boards covered in crimson velvet. Beside it is a couch, a sort of long chair without back or arms, with many cushions of samite, almost on the level of the window-sill, on which any one leaning back can see over the whole seashore of Rimini. A chamber organ of small size, with chest, pipes, keys, bellows, and registers finely worked, stands in the corner, a lute and a viol beside it. On a small table is a silver mirror, amongst scent-bottles, glasses, purses, girdles, and other trinkets. Large iron candlesticks stand beside the alcove and the musicians' gallery. Footstools are scattered about, and in the midst of the floor is seen the bolt of a trap-door, through which a passage leads to the lower rooms.

[Francesca *is reading in the book. The* Women, *seated on the footstools in a circle, embroidering the border of a coverlet, listen to the story; each of them has a little phial of seed pearls and gold threads hanging from her girdle. The March sunlight beats on the crimson taffeta, and sheds a diffused light on the faces bent over the needlework. The* Slave *is near the window-sill, gazing into the sky.*]

Francesca [*reading*] "Thereat Galeotto comes to her and says:

'Lady, have pity on him, for God's sake,
And do for me as I would do for you,
If you should ask it of me.' 'What is this
That I should pity?' 'Lady, you well know
How much he loves you, and has done for you,
More than knight ever did for any lady.'
'In truth he has done more for me than I
Can ever do for him again, and he
Could ask of me nothing I would not do;
But he asks nothing of me, and he has
So deep a sadness, that I marvel at it.'
And Galeotto says: 'Lady, have pity.'
'That will I have,' says she, 'and even such
As you would have me; but he asks of me
Nothing . . .'"

[*The* WOMEN *laugh.* FRANCESCA *throws herself back on the cushions, troubled and enervated.*]

Garsenda. Madonna,
How ever could a knight, and Launcelot,
Have been so shamefaced?

Alda. All the while the queen,
The poor queen, only longing she might give
Her lover what he would not ask of her!

Biancofiore. She should have said to him: "Most worthy knight,
Your sadness will avail you not a mite."

Altichiara. Guenevere did but jest with him, and chose
To wait her time; but nothing in the world
Was in her mind more than a speedy bed.

Adonella. And Galeotto, though indeed he was
A noble prince, knew well enough the art
That is called—

Francesca. Adonella, hush! I tire
Of listening to your chattering so long.
Smaragdi, tell me, is the falcon back?

Slave. No, lady; he has lost his way.

Francesca. Do you hear
His little golden bell?

Slave. I cannot hear it.
My eyes are good, and yet I cannot see him.
He has flown too high.

[FRANCESCA *turns to the window and gazes out.*]

Alda. He will be lost, Madonna.
It was not well to let him out of leash.
He was a little haughty.

Garsenda. He was one
They call the Ventimillia breed, brave birds;
This one had thirteen feathers in his tail.

Altichiara. Their home is on an island;
He will have flown back to his island home.

Biancofiore. He followed cranes, was good at catching them;
And Simonetto begs of you, Madonna,
That he may have a crane, to make two fifes
Of the two leg-bones, and he says they sound
Sweetly as might be.

Garsenda. No,
He is not coming back; he was too proud;
Ah, like the one who gave him to you, Messer
Malatestino, I would say: may he
Not hear me! If you had but rubbed his beak,
At dead of night,
With horse's belly-grease,
He would have come to love you so, Madonna,
He never would have flown out of your hand.

[*The* WOMEN *burst out laughing.*]

Adonella. Now listen to the learned doctoress!

Altichiara. At dead of night with horse's belly-grease!

Garsenda. Why, yes, I have read the book that Danchi wrote,
The first and best master of falconry;
It gives you all the rules.

Francesca. Go, Adonella,
Run to the falconer, tell him what has happened,
And bid him go with his decoy, and call
And search all over. He has flown, perhaps,
Up to some tower, and perched there. Bid him go
And search all over.

[ADONELLA *drops her needle and hurries out.*]

Altichiara. He has fled away,
Madonna after the first swallows.

Alda. See,
The blood of all the swallows
Is raining on the sea.

Biancofiore [*singing*]. "Fresh in the Calends of March,
O swallows, coming home,
Fresh from the quiet lands beyond the sea."

Francesca. O, yes, yes, Biancofiore!
Some music, give me music!
Sing over a low song
In the minor key!
Leave off your sewing, go
And bring me music.
[*The* WOMEN *rise quickly and fold up the taffeta.*]
Look
For Simonetto, Biancofiore.
Biancofiore. Yes, Madonna.
Francesca. And you, Alda, look for Bordo
And Signorello and Rosso,
And bid them come and bring the instruments
And bring the tablature
For making music in the room here.
Alda. Yes, Madonna.
Francesca. Altichiara, if you see
The doctor, send him to me.
Altichiara. Yes, Madonna.
Francesca. And you, Garsenda, if you come across
The merchant who is here from Florence bid him
Come hither.
Garsenda. Yes, Madonna, I will seek him.
Francesca. Bring me a garland of March violets.
To-day 'tis the March calends.
Biancofiore. Madonna, you shall have one, and a fair one.
[*All go out.*]
[FRANCESCA *turns to the* SLAVE, *who is still gazing into the sky.*]
Francesca. O Smaragdi, he is not coming back?
Slave. He is not coming back.
The falconer will bring him back again.
Do not be troubled.
Francesca. But I am troubled, yes; Malatestino
Will be enraged with me, because I have kept
His gifts so ill. He tells me that he gave me
The king of falcons. I have lost it.
Slave. Wild
And thankless and unkind, if so it flies
From the face of man.
[FRANCESCA *is silent for a few instants.*]
Francesca. I am afraid of him.
Slave. Afraid of whom, lady?
Francesca. I am afraid
Of Malatestino.
Slave. Is it his blind eye
That frightens you?
Francesca. No, no, the other one,
The one he sees with: it is terrible.
Slave. Let him not see you, lady.
Francesca. Ah, Smaragdi, what was the wine you brought
That night, upon the Mastra tower, when all
The city was in arms? Was it bewitched?
Slave. Lady, what are you saying?
Francesca. It is as if you brought me a drugged wine;
The poison is taking hold
Upon the veins of her that drank of it,
And all my fate grows cruel to me again.
Slave. What is this sadness, lady?
Although the falcon has not yet come back,
He has come back to you,
Lady, who is the sun that your soul loves.
Francesca [*turning pale, and speaking with repressed anger*].
Unhappy woman!
How do you dare to speak it? Treachery
Even in you? Accursed be the hour
In which you brought him to me, and his fraud
With him! Was it not you
Who made the way that leads me to my death?
Three cups of bitterness I do not leave you;
It is you that set them down before me, you
That brim them up each day, without a tear.
[*The* SLAVE *flings herself on the ground.*]
Slave. Tread on me, tread on me! Between two stones
Crush in my head!
Francesca [*more calmly*].
Rise up,
It is no fault of yours, my poor Smaragdi,
It is no fault of yours.
Suddenly like a spirit of my heart
You ran to meet my joy! On your eyes too
There was a veil; and veiled by the same fate
Was the iniquity of my father. We,
All of us, were made powerless and unpitying,
Wretched and ignorant,

Upon the bank of a river,
Unblamable all of us,
Upon the bank of a loud rushing river.
I crossed it, I alone,
I had no thought of you;
I found myself upon the other side.
And we are thrust apart,
Ah me, and never to be one again.
And I now say to you:
I cannot. And you say:
Cross and come back.
And I: I do not know.

[*She gives to the last words almost the cadence of a melody; then she laughs a dry and bitter laugh, which seems as if torn out of her. But the sound of her own laughter frightens her. The* Slave *stands trembling.*]

O my poor reason, rule
Still, do not turn away!
What is this demon that has hold on me?
The enemy was laughing in my heart:
Did you not hear him?
I cannot pray now, I can pray no longer.

Slave [*in a low voice*]. Shall I not call him?

Francesca [*starting*]. Who?

[*She looks about her anxiously: her eye turns to the motionless curtain over the door. Her craving overcomes her, her voice sounds hoarse.*]

Smaragdi, did you see Messer Giovanni
Take horse?

Slave. Yes, lady, with the old man too,
With Messer Malatesta, the old man.
They are going surely to an act of peace
With the Lord Bishop. They are riding now
By Sant' Arcangelo.

Francesca [*darkly*]. You watch, Smaragdi; you see all, hear all,
Know all; well, be so always.

Slave. Doubt me not,
Lady. Sleep safe and sound. Could I but give you
Joy, as the stone whose name I bear could give you!

Francesca. And do you know where Malatestino is?

Slave. At Roncofreddo, sent there by his father
With thirty horse.

Francesca. I am afraid of him.
Keep him away from me.

Slave. But why so, lady?
When he was sick, did you not care for him,
Day and night, like a sister?

Francesca. O, that name
Is like a poison here. Samaritana,
Where are you? and the stream of your young freshness,
Where does it run, that now can never slake
My thirst when I am nigh to perishing?
I see about me, in the shadow about me,
Eyes, savage eyes, that spy on me, the eyes
Of wild beasts only waiting to take hold
And fight over their prey;
And they are all veined with the selfsame blood,
They are all brothers;
One mother gave them birth. Ah me! what sad
Sorcery have I suffered? Who has set
Thus, thus, upon the threshold of my life
This mortal sin? You, creature of the earth,
Who dig about the roots of poisonous flowers,
Say, where was this unnatural evil born?
It is from you I know
The old hard song:
"If three I find, three I take!" Now the demon
Has taken them all together, three has taken,
And me with them.

Slave. Call not upon the enemy!
Be it forgiven to you, body and soul!
You are deceived in this.
The shadow is a glass to you, and therein
You see your own eyes burn.
Call not upon your head
Some evil fortune! May the Lord God watch
Over you as your slave will surely watch!

Francesca. There is no escape, Smaragdi.
You have said it:
The shadow is a glass to me; and God
Lets me be lost. What days
And nights I spent alone by the bedside
Of the sick man, that I might purge myself
Of evil thoughts that faded, faded out.
I touched the horrible wound,
Praying; I washed away

That evil foulness with my prayers. And then
My soul, amid that horror, seemed to see
Grace and salvation; then it was I found
The beast desire that wakened in the veins
Of that too violent life. Do you understand?
The gaping wound under the forehead closed
And another opened, far more horrible,
Within the breast. And thoughts
That had faded out, my old despairing thoughts,
Seemed to infect me with a blacker venom,
More cruelly; and my flesh
Upon my sorrow like a covering
Intolerable;
And exiled from the world
All the sweet things of springtide and of sleep;
And the very face of love
Turned into stone, and turned
To a terror; only hatred and desire,
Bewildered in the darkness of the world,
And reeling blindly in their work of death,
Like drunken slaughterers,
That, full of wine
And fury, slay each other witlessly.
Slave [*in a low voice*].
Do not despair! Listen, listen! I know
A spell to cast on him who makes you fear;
I know a drink that drives these thoughts away
And cures remembrance. You must give it him
With the left hand
When he dismounts wearied and hungering.
I will teach you how to say the spell.
Francesca. Smaragdi,
If it avails at all, give it to me,
And let me drink it, and be free again.
But there is no escape. Will you interpret
The dream I always dream,
Night after night?
Slave. Lady, tell me the dream;
I will interpret it.
Francesca. Night after night I see the savage hunt
Nastagio degli Onesti saw one day
In the pine-wood of Ravenna, as I heard
Bannino tell the story when we went
Down to the shore at Chiassi. In my dream
I see it as it was in very truth.
A naked woman, through the depth of the wood,
Dishevelled, torn by branches and by thorns,
Weeping and crying for mercy,
Runs, followed by two mastiffs at her heels
That bite her cruelly when they overtake her;
See, and behind her through the depth of the wood,
Mounted on a black charger,
A dark knight, strong and angry in the face,
Sword in hand, threatening her
With a swift death in terrifying words.
Then the dogs, taking hold
Of the woman's naked side,
Stop her; and the fierce knight, coming abreast,
Dismounts from off his horse,
And with his sword in hand
Runs at the woman so,
And she, upon her knees, pinned to the earth
By the two mastiffs, cries to him for mercy;
And he thereat drives at her with full strength,
Pierces her in the breast
So that the sword goes through her; and she falls
Forward, upon her face,
Still always weeping; and the knight draws forth
A dagger, and opens her
By the hip-bone, and draws
Her heart out, and the rest,
And throws it to the dogs that hungrily
Devour it of a sudden. But she has lain
Not long before, as if she were not dead,
She rises up and she begins again
Her lamentable running toward the sea;
And the two dogs after her, tearing her,
Always, and always after her the knight,
Upon his horse again,
And with his sword in hand,
Always threatening her.
Tell me, can you interpret me my dream, Smaragdi?
[*The* Slave, *as she listens, seems stricken with terror.*]
Are you frightened?
[Garsenda *enters followed by the* Merchant *and his* Boy *carrying a pack.*]

Garsenda [*gaily*]. Madonna, here is the merchant with his goods.
May he come in? He is the Florentine,
Who came to Rimino yesterday with the escort
Of Messer Paolo.

[FRANCESCA, *her face suddenly flushing, shakes off her gloomy thoughts, and seems eager to seek forgetfulness of her mortal anguish; but a kind of painful tension accompanies her volubility.*]

Francesca. Come in, come in, we are minded to renew
Our robes with the new season.
Come in, come in. I would have something made
Of sarcenet woven of many coloured threads,
Of many colours, of a hundred colours,
So that at each turn and return of light
And of sight the aspect changes; O Smaragdi,
A raiment of pure joy!

[*The* MERCHANT *inclines humbly.*]

Good merchant, what have you to offer me?

Merchant. Noble Madonna, everything that suits
With your nobility; light taffetas,
Highly embroidered, circlet upon circlet,
Sarcenet, samite, and damask,
Grogram and bombasin,
Camlet, barracan, fustian,
Serge, Neapolitan doublets,
Sicilian tunics,
Watered silk, high or low, watered with gold
And silver thread, and waved;
Linen of Lucca, Osta, Dondiscarte,
Of Bruges, of Tournai, and of Terremonde,
And of Mostavolieri in Normandy,
Fine serge from Como, changeable taffeta,
Cloth of silk worked in trees and squares and eyelets
And patterns toothed and fish-boned,
Velvets of every sort
And every make,
Velvets one piled, and two piled, and three piled.

[GARSENDA *bursts out laughing.*]

Francesca. Enough! enough! And have you found a warehouse
In Rimino for so many goods?

Merchant. I am
Giotto di Bernarduccio Boninsegni,
The agent of the Company of Piero
Di Niccolaio degli Oricellari,
That has its thousand samples in the warehouses
Of Calimala and of Calimaruzza,
And sends its agents over all the west,
As far as Ireland, and, in the Levant,
As far as the Cattaio, noble Madonna.

[GARSENDA *laughs. The* MERCHANT *turns and looks at her.*]

Garsenda. A florin or two, eh?
You lent to Prester John,
(Poor wretch!) or to the Khan of Babylon.

[*The* MERCHANT *opens the pack before* FRANCESCA, *who stands at the reading desk, and exhibits his goods.*]

Merchant. We go to Armalecco, to buy vair,
Sable and ermine,
And marten-skins, and lynx, and other skins;
And to buy woollen too,
To the monasteries of England, and to China,
To Bilignass, Croccostrande, and Isticchi,
To Diolacresca, Giúttebi, and Bufeltro,
In Cornwall.

[GARSENDA *laughs.*]

Garsenda. Then you saw
King Mark in Cornwall, then
The fair-haired Iseult bought brocades from you
Sky-coloured, of a surety? Or you carried
Her Tristan, hidden in your pack of goods,
Into her chamber.

Merchant. They say that in Romagna
All fowling, nay, all gulling, is permitted;
But the blackbird has already crossed the stream
And his mate has crossed the Po already.

Garsenda. Shafts
Of Florence make and Lombard: bastard shafts.
They neither shine nor sting,
Because I do not know them.

[FRANCESCA *seems intent on turning over the stuffs.*]

Francesca. This is good,
Brocade with golden pomegranates. And how,
Giotto, did you come here to Rimino?

Merchant. Noble Madonna, full of perils is
The life of merchants. Needs must be we take
Every occasion that is offered us.
I, by good fortune, chanced to come upon
The escort of the noble Messer Paolo,
And had good leave to follow it in safety.
So swift a journey may I ever make
Again; with Messer Paolo you ride
The whole day long, and never sleep at all.

[FRANCESCA *feels over the stuffs, outwardly calm, but an unconquerable smile burns in her eyes.* GARSENDA *has gone down on her knees to see the stuffs.*]

Francesca. You rode so swiftly?

Merchant. Without rest or stay,
With tightened bridles, if I might so put it;
And every stream they forded, could not wait
Until the flood had ebbed. And Messer Paolo
Laboured his horse with spur in such a haste
That there was always between him and us,
A mile or so of distance. I should say
He has some urgent business here. He asked
The Commune leave of absence
After two months, or little more, that he
Had entered into office; truth it is
That the whole city sorrows at it, never
A more accustomed and more civil knight
Was Captain of the People there in Florence.

Francesca. I will take this brocade.

Merchant. Good, very good,
Madonna. And Bernardino della Porta
Of Parma, they have chosen
To take his place, is worth,
Why not so much as one hair of the head
Of Messer Paolo.

Francesca. And this samite too.

Merchant. Madonna, this with patterns all of gold . . .

Francesca. Yes, I like this one too. It seems to me
You Florentines keep feast on feast, and make
The year a holiday, and care for nothing
Except for games and sports and banquetings
And dances.

Merchant. Yes, Madonna, 'tis a sweet
And blessed land, our Florence: 'tis the flower
Of the others, Fiorenza!

Francesca. I will take this silk too with the silver lines.
And the Captain of the People,
Was he well liked by all the companies
Of knights and ladies?

Merchant. Each rivalled with each
Of all the companies
To have his presence, as the most well-spoken
And gallant man he indeed is; but he,
By what I know, would hold himself apart,
A trifle haughtily, and rare it was
To see him at their suppers. And in time
Of Carnival, in Santa Felicita
Beyond the Arno, I know by Messer Betto
De'Rossi that they made a company,
A thousand men or more, all dressed in white,
And Messer Paolo by this company
Was chosen Lord of Love,
But he would not consent . . .

Francesca. Here, this shot sarcenet
And this buff-coloured cotton. You were saying,
Giotto . . .

[GARSENDA *takes the stuffs selected, and puts them aside, first holding them up to the light.*]

Merchant. I have seen him sometimes go about
With Guido of the Messers Cavalcante
Dei Cavalcanti; he that is, they say,
One of the best logicians in the world,
And a most manifest
Natural philosopher,
And, as they say, he seeks,
Among the tombs, to find
There never was a God.

Francesca. Garsenda, you may have this violet samite.

Garsenda. O Madonna, much thanks!

Merchant. 'Tis a fine violet,
One of the finest colours of the dye.

Francesca. And for you, Smaragdi? You were saying, Giotto . . .

Merchant. Often he had with him
Good singers and good players, specially
Casella da Pistoia the musician,
A master in the art of singing songs
Of love . . .

Francesca. For you, Smaragdi, you shall have
This green-brown serge. And Altichiara too
And Biancofiore, each of you must have
A new dress.
Merchant. This, Madonna, is a colour
Of the newest fashion, it is called the sea-mew,
A very marvel, with its golden bunches;
Mona Giuglia degli Adimari, the other week,
Bought from me full ten yards of it. And this
With the goose pattern. Capon's foot, bear's ear,
Young pigeon, angel's wing,
Iris, corn-flower, new colours . . .
[FRANCESCA *rises impetuously, as if breaking some constraint.*]
Francesca. Merchant, leave it,
And I will choose at leisure.
[*She turns towards the window and looks out on the shining sea, shading her eyes with her hand.*]
How the sun
Is strong, this March, and fierce!
There goes a little ship with a red sail!
Here are the swallows coming back in flocks!
Garsenda [*to the* MERCHANT]. How long shall you be staying in Rimino?
Merchant. Three days. And then I have to make my way
To Barletta and from Barletta I take ship
For Cyprus.
[*The* SLAVE *lights up, hearing the name of her country.*]
Garsenda. Listen, listen,
Smaragdi!
Slave [*anxiously*]. Do you go to Cyprus, merchant?
Merchant. I go there yearly. We have warehouses
At Famagosta, and there yearly sell
Thousands and thousands besants' worth of goods.
Are you from Cyprus?
Slave. Salute for me the Mount Chionodes,
His head in snow and olives at his feet;
And drink for me at the spring of Chitria
A draught for my heart's sake.
Francesca [*turning*]. "And Cyprus I would make for,
And at Limisso anchor,
And land my sailors for a kiss, my captains
For love!"
[*Instruments and merry voices are heard preluding while she goes towards the bed, droopingly, as if to lie down on it.*]
Slave. And who is king there? Sire Ughetto?
Merchant. Ughetto died young. Ugo di Lusignano,
His cousin, is king now. And there have been
Most evil deeds,
And poisonings of women,
And treachery of barons and the plague,
Locusts and earthquakes,
And Venus, queen of devils, has appeared.
[*The sounds of music and voices and laughter come nearer.* FRANCESCA *lies back on the bed between the half-closed curtains.*]
[*The* WOMEN, *with the exception of* ADONELLA, *enter, followed by the* DOCTOR, *the* ASTROLOGER, *the* JESTER *and the* MUSICIANS, *who tune their instruments and prelude on them. The* DOCTOR *wears a dressing-gown, down to the heels, of a dark tan-colour; the* ASTROLOGER *a green-brown robe and a black turban striped with yellow; the* JESTER *a scarlet jerkin. The* MUSICIANS *go up on their gallery, and range themselves in order.*]
Altichiara. Madonna, here is Maestro Almodoro.
Alda. And we have found the astrologer, Madonna.
Biancofiore. And the Jester too, Gian Figo, that procures
Recipes against melancholy with songs
And stories and the dust of No-Man's Land.
Alda. And the voices and the players
On bagpipe, flute and lute,
Rebec and monochord.
[*Standing upright between the curtains,* FRANCESCA *looks before her as if bewildered, neither smiling nor speaking.*]
Biancofiore [*coming forward*].
Here is the garland
Of violets. May it chase your melancholy!

[*She offers it to her gracefully.* FRANCESCA *takes it, while* ALTICHIARA *takes the mirror from the table and holds it up before her face as she puts on the garland. The* SLAVE *slowly goes out.*]

Garsenda. O Maestro Almodoro,
Galen, Hippocrates, and Avicenna
Returned to earth inside one doctor's gown,
Can you tell us what is melancholy?

[*The* DOCTOR *places himself in their midst, and assumes a solemn air.*]

Doctor. Melancholy
Is a dark humour many call black bile,
And it is cold and dry,
And has its situation in the spine;
Its nature is of the earth
And of the autumn. Nec dubium est quidem
Melancholicus morbus
Ab impostore Diabolo . . .

[*The* JESTER *puts himself in front of him, covering him. The* WOMEN *and the* MUSICIANS *laugh and whisper.*]

Jester. When
Your devil was born, my devil had found his legs.
Melancholy is to drink as the Germans do,
Madonna; to backbite as the Greeks do,
To sing as the French do,
To dance as the Moors do,
To sleep as the English do,
And to stand steady like
Messer Ferragunze the Cordelier.
Madonna, I have had from you those two
Pieces of scarlet in advance: but see,
The jerkin that was new has become old.
Have you two other pieces, may it please you,
Of velvet?

[*The* WOMEN *laugh. He eyes the* MERCHANT'S *wares, scattered over the couch.*]

Garsenda. The Astrologer! Speak now,
Astrologer of Syria who sees all things!

[*The bearded* ASTROLOGER *puts on a gloomy look and speaks with a voice that seems to come from a deep cave.*]

Astrologer. All darts he sees not, who sees every dart;
But he who blindly aims against the heart
Takes aim from thence, whence doth all life depart.

Jester. And I believe not in your art.

[FRANCESCA *looks sharply at the* SARACEN *as if fearing something.*]

Francesca. What do you mean by this dark riddle? Speak,
Maestro Isacco, explain.

Astrologer. Lady, who inward looks,
Looks not, but he who wills that which he looks.

Jester. And yet the man of Friuli has said:
He who wants woman wants a lord and master,
And he who wants a lord and master wants—
Catch who catch can! And then
In the book of Madam Mogias of Egypt,
That is called the Book of Piercing to the Heart,
It is declared that woman's enemies
Are seventeen—

[ADONELLA *enters, carrying five garlands of white narcissi, hanging from a gold wire that binds them together.*]

Adonella. Madonna, the falconer
Has called the falcon back. Some of his feathers
Are bent or broken a little; but warm water
And a soft bandage will soon set them right.

Astrologer. The falcon's beak thou shalt not shear or break,
But scanty clippings take;
For these, well mixed with wool, long talons make.

Francesca. You speak in riddles, then,
To-day, Maestro Isacco?

Astrologer. Not every one who speaketh speaks, but he
Who sleeps must silent be;
Evils in life and truth in prophecy.

Jester. So may it be, amen! Bring in the bier.
O Saracen Isacco,
You are a very great astronomer;
You prophesy, besides;
But you must make a little matter plain.
Tell me, which is the easier to know,
The things that are now past,
Or else the things that are to come?

Astrologer. O fool,
Who does not know the things that he has seen,
The things that are behind?

Jester. Good, very good; we'll see how well you know them.
Now tell me this,
What were you doing on the last March calends,
A year ago!

[*The* ASTROLOGER *thinks.*]

Well, then, six months ago?

[*The* ASTROLOGER *thinks. The* WOMEN *laugh. The* JESTER *speaks rapidly.*]

I will ask you, then, one last time: can you tell me
What weather it was three months ago?

[*The* ASTROLOGER *thinks and stares before him. The* JESTER *plucks him by the robe.*]

Isacco,
Don't cast nativities, you need not gape,
Stand steady. Now, what ship
Came here, a month ago? What ship set sail?
What do you gape at? Did you eat indoors
Or out of doors a fortnight since?
Astrologer. Wait, wait
A little.
Jester. Wait! What? But I will not wait.
Come now, what were you doing,
A week ago to-day?
Astrologer. Give me a little respite.
Jester. Why, what respite
Should such as I give such as you who know
The things that are to come? What did you eat
Four days ago?
Astrologer. Ah, I will tell you that.
Jester. What did you say?
Astrologer. You are in such haste.
Jester. What haste? Well, tell me now, what did you eat
Yesterday morning? Tell me!

[*The* ASTROLOGER, *annoyed, turns his back upon him. He plucks him by the sleeve.*]

Stop! Look at me a moment!
I lay you ten to one you do not know
If you are wide awake or if you dream.
Astrologer. I know I do not sleep, and that you are
The greatest fool now living in the world!
Jester. But I assure you that you do not know.
Come here. Don't go like that against the wind
Of Mongibello. Tell me, have you not
Hundreds of times gone up and down the stairs
Of the belfry-tower of Santa Colomba? Well,
How many stairs are there? Come here, I say!
Don't run away from me. Have you ever eaten
Medlars? How many pips are in a medlar?

[*The infuriated* ASTROLOGER *frees himself from the grip of the* JESTER, *amidst much laughter.*]

Then if you don't know that,
How can you know things that are in the sky,
And in the hearts of women, and in hair?
Find a cordwainer, bid him make a rope
Out of your beard, and hang you to a star.
Biancofiore. Madonna has smiled!
Gian Figo has made even Madonna smile!
Go, go, dear doctor, to your house again,
And take your medicine and your Latin with you,
To-day is the March calends! Song means dance
To-day, and dance means song.
Play, Simonetto, play!

[*The* MUSICIANS *begin a prelude. Those standing near go to the back, so as to leave room for the dance.* ADONELLA *unlooses the gold wire, and distributes the garlands of narcissi to her companions, who put them on; and retains for herself the one that bears two swallows' wings.* ALDA *takes out of a little bag four painted wooden swallows that have a kind of small handle under the breast, and gives one to each of her companions; who, standing ready for the dance, hold them each raised in the left hand.* ADONELLA *whistles, in imitation of the chirruping of swallows, and, while the other four dance and sing, she utters at intervals, according to the rhythm, the loud chirping that heralds the spring.*]

Alda. Fresh, fresh, in the calends of March,
O swallows, coming home

Fresh from the quiet lands beyond the sea;
First to bring back the great good messages
Of joy, and first to taste the good wild scent.
O creature of pure joy,
Come in your garments white and black, fly hither,
And bring your springtide gladness to our dance!

Altichiara. March comes, and February
Goes with the wind to-day;
Bring out your taffety
And put the vair away.
And come with me, I pray,
Across the streams in flood,
Under the branching wood that leans along,
With dancing and with song in company
With fleet-foot lovers, or upon the lea
Gather the violets,
Where the grass smells more sweet because her feet,
Have passed that way, the naked feet of Spring!

Garsenda. To-day the earth appears
New-wedded like a girl;
The face that the sea wears
To-day is like a pearl.
Hark, hark, is that the merle
Deep in the thicket? Hark,
How swift upsoars the lark into the sky!
The cruel wind goes by, and in his mouth
Bears ravished nests! O swallow of the south,
Thy tail's an arrow feather,
And like the twanging of a bow thy cry
Whereby the spring will strike, the hands of Spring!

Biancofiore. O creature of delight,
Lead thou the dancing feet,
In robe of black and white,
As is thy usage sweet.
Make here thy stay, O fleet
Swallow, here in this room
Wherein is seen, in gloom or light of day,
The tale of Iseult, the fair flower of Ireland,
As here thou seest, and this shall be thy garland,
Thy nest, no prison-mesh,
Seeing that the fresh fair lady seated here
Is not Francesca, but is very—

[*The* Dancers *return rapidly, towards* Francesca *and form in a line, stretching out towards her the hand that holds the swallow, and the other; and they all sing with* Biancofiore, *without interval, the last word of the stanza.*]

All. Spring!

[*At the beginning of the last movement the* Slave *appears on the threshold. As the* Musicians *play the last notes, she goes up to* Francesca *hurriedly and whispers to her something that suddenly disturbs her.*]

Francesca [*impetuously*]. Biancofiore, Altichiara, Alda, Adonella,
Garsenda, for the new
Delight of this new dance,
I must give you something new:
These dresses, take them, each!

[*She picks up some of the scattered goods and gives them.*]

Here's for you, and for you!

[*The* Jester *comes forward in a sidelong way.*]

And for you too,
Gian Figo, but no jesting.

[*The* Jester *takes it and decamps.*]

Garsenda, take this too for the Musicians,
They can make jackets of it,
With stripes of red and yellow. And see, too, Merchant,
You set aside two lengths of some good serge
For Maestro Almodoro, and Maestro Isacco.
Now go, I have given you something, all of you,
For the March calends' sake. Go now, and, going,
Sing in the court the song of the March swallows.
You must come back again, Merchant; Garsenda
Will bring you word. You may leave your wares here now.
Go, and be merry, until vesper-time;
Adonella, lead the way into the court.
A happy spring to you!

[*The* Musicians *come down from their gallery, playing, and go out. The* Jester *skips after them. All the others bow before* Francesca *and take the gifts they have received, following the* Musicians *with whispering and laughter. The* Slave *remains, busy wrapping up the wares in bundles.*

[FRANCESCA *abandons herself to her anxiety. She takes several steps, blindly; with a sudden movement, she draws the curtains of the alcove, which are half open, showing the bed. Then she sits down before the reading-desk, and glances at the open book, but, in turning, the train of her dress catches in the lute, which falls, and lies on the ground. She trembles.*]

No, no, Smaragdi! Run, and tell him not
To come!

[*The sounds die away in the distance. The* SLAVE, *having finished, goes towards the door.* FRANCESCA *takes a step towards her as if to call her back.*]

Smaragdi!

[*The* SLAVE *goes out.*]

[*After a few moments, a hand raises the curtain, and* PAOLO MALATESTA *appears. The door closes behind him. As* PAOLO *and* FRANCESCA *gaze at one another, for a moment, without finding words, both change colour. The sound of* MUSIC *dies away through the palace. The room is gilded by the rays of the setting sun, which shine through the long window.*]

Francesca. Welcome, my lord and kinsman.

Paolo. I have come,
Hearing a sound of music, to bring greetings,
My greetings of return.

Francesca. You have come back
Speedily, sir; indeed with the first swallow.
My women even now
Were singing a new song that they have made
To welcome March. And there was also here
The merchant out of Florence, who had come
Among your following. Of him I had
Tidings of you.

Paolo. But I, of you, no tidings,
None, I heard nothing there,
Nothing of you at all,
From that day onward, when, one perilous night
You put a cup of wine into my hands,
And said to me, "farewell!"
And said to me, "God-speed!"

Francesca. I have no memory,
My lord, concerning this. I have prayed much.

Paolo. You have forgotten, then?

Francesca. I have prayed much.

Paolo. And I have suffered much.
If it be true that he who suffers conquers,
I think I must needs conquer. . . .

Francesca. What?

Paolo. My fate,
Francesca.

Francesca. And yet you have come back?

Paolo. I have come back
To live.

Francesca. Not to die now?

Paolo. Ah, you remember
The death I was to die,
And you that would not! So much, at the least,
You have remembered.

[*She draws back towards the window, as if withdrawing herself from his scarcely repressed violence.*]

Francesca. Paolo, give me peace!
It is so sweet a thing to live forgetting,
But one hour only, and be no more tossed,
Out of the tempest.
Do not call back, I pray,
The shadow of that time in this fresh light
That slakes my thirst at last
Like that long draught
That at the ford I drank,
Out of the living water.
And now, I desire now
To think my soul has left
That shore to come into this sheltering shore,
Where music and where hope are sisters; so
To forget all the sorrow that has been
Yesterday, and shall be
To-morrow, and so let
All of my life, and all the veins of it,
And all the days of it,
And all old things in it, far-away things,
But for one hour, one hour,
Slip away quietly, a quiet tide,
Unto that sea,
Even these eyes might behold smilingly,
Were it not hidden by the tears that tremble

And do not fall. O peace, peace in that sea
That was so wild with waves
Yesterday, and to-day is like a pearl.
Give me peace!
Paolo. It is the voice of spring
I hear, and from your lips the music runs
Over the world, that I have seemed to hear,
Riding against the wind,
Sing in the voice of the wind,
At every turn of the way,
At every glade and high
On the hill-tops, and on the edges of the woods,
And under them the streams,
When my desire bent back,
Burning with breath, the mane of my wild horse,
Over the saddle-bow, and the soul lived,
In the swiftness of that flight,
On swiftness,
Like a torch carried in the wind, and all
The thoughts of all my soul, save one, save one,
Were all blown backward, spent
Like sparks behind me.
Francesca. Ah, Paolo, like sparks
All your words are, and still they take no rest,
And all your soul lives still
In the strong wind and swiftness of your coming,
And drags me with it, and I am full of fear.
I pray you, I pray you now,
That you will give me peace
For this hour only,
My fair friend, my sweet friend,
That I may quiet and put to sleep in me
The old sick pain, and forget all the rest;
Only bring back into my eyes the first
Look that took hold on me out of your face,
Unknown to me; for these dry eyelids have
No need of any healing but that dew,
Only to bring back and to have in them
Again the miracle of that first look;
And they will feel that grace has come to them,
As they felt once, out of the heart of a dream,
The coming near of the dawn;
And feel that they are to be comforted,
Perhaps in the shade
Of the new garland.
Paolo. And so garlanded
With violets I saw you yesterday
In a meadow, as I stayed,
Pausing in journeying,
And being alone, and having far outstripped
My escort. I could hear
Only the champing bit
Of my horse pasturing, and see from there
The towers of Meldola in a wood. And all
Palpitated with you
In the high morning. And you came to me
With violets, and returning to your lips
I heard again a word that you had spoken,
Saying: I pardon you, and with much love!
Francesca. That word was spoken
And perfect joy awaits upon the word.
[Paolo's *eyes wander over the room.*]
Ah, do not look around
Upon these things,
Silent, as if with joy,
And only full of sorrow and of shame.
No autumn withered them,
They shall not be awakened with the spring.
Look on the sea, the sea
That has borne witness for us once with God
To certain words once spoken, vast and calm
And shining where the battle came between,
And silent where the rage of clamour came
Between, and one sail passed upon the sea,
Going alone upon its way, like this,
See, yonder? And our souls
Were tried, as if with fire.
But now sit here, upon the window-seat,
And not with weapons now for killing men,
But without cruelty. See, Paolo,
With this mere sprig of basil.
[*She takes a cluster from her head, and offers it to him; as he steps nearer, his foot strikes against the catch of the trap-door, and he stops.*]
You have struck your foot
Against the ring of the trap-door. It leads
From here into another room beneath.
[Paolo *stoops to look at it.*]
Paolo. Ah, you can go from here into a room
Beneath.
Francesca [*giving him the sprig of basil*].
Come, take it, smell it; it is good.
Smaragdi planted it in memory

Of Cyprus, in this vase;
And when she waters it,
She sings: "Under your feet
I spread sweet basil,
I bid you sleep there,
I bid you pluck it,
I bid you smell it,
And remember the giver!"
At Florence all the women
Have their sweet basil on the window-sill.
Do you not know? But come,
Will you not tell me something of your life?
Sit here, and tell me something of yourself,
How you have lived.

Paolo. Why do you ask of me
To live the misery of my life twice over?
All that was joy to others was to me
Sorrow and heaviness. One only thing,
Music, could ever give me pleasant hours.
I went sometimes to a great singer's house,
He was by name Casella,
And there were met many of gentle birth,
Among them Guido Cavalcanti, and these
Were wont to make rhymes in the vulgar tongue;
And there was Ser Brunetto,
Returned from Paris, wise
With rhetoric of the schools,
Also a youth
Of the Alighieri, Dante was his name,
And I much loved this youth, he was so full
Of thoughts of love and sorrow,
So burning and so loverlike for song.
And something like a healing influence passed
Out of his heart to mine,
That seemed shut up in me; for the exceeding
And too much sweetness hid
Sometimes within the song moved him to weep
Silently, silent tears,
And seeing his weeping, I too wept with him.

[*Her eyes fill with tears and her voice trembles.*]

Francesca. You wept?

Paolo. Francesca!

Francesca. Wept? Ah, Paolo mine.
Blessed be he that taught your heart such tears,
Such tears! I will pray always for his peace.
For now I see you, now I see you again
As you were then, sweet friend.
The grace has come with healing to my eyes.

[*She appears as if transfigured with perfect joy. With a slow movement she takes the garland from her head and lays it on the open book beside her.*]

Paolo. Why do you take the garland from your head?

Francesca. Because it was not you who gave it me.
I gave you once a rose
From that sarcophagus.
But now, poor flowers, I feel
Your freshness is all spent!

[Paolo *rises, and goes up to the reading-desk and touches the violets.*]

Paolo. 'Tis true! Do you remember? on that night
Of fire and blood, you asked of me the gift
Of a fair helmet; and I gave it you:
'Twas finely tempered.
The steel and gold of it have never known
What rust is, soiling. And you let it fall.
Do you remember?
I picked it up, and I have held it dear
As a king's crown.
Since then, when I have set it on my head,
I feel twice bold, and there is not a thought
Within my heart that is not as a flame.

[*He bends over the book.*]

Ah, listen, the first words that meet my eye!
"Made richer by that gift than had you given him
The gift of all the world."
What book is this?

Francesca. The famous history
Of Launcelot of the Lake.

[*She rises and goes over to the reading-desk.*]

Paolo. And have you read
The book all through?

Francesca. I have but
Come in my reading to this point.

Paolo. To where?
Here, where the mark is?

[*He reads.*]

". . . but you ask of me
Nothing. . . ." Will you go on?

Francesca. Look how the sea is growing white with light!

Paolo. Will you not read the page with me, Francesca?
Francesca. Look yonder, how a flight
Of swallows comes, and coming sets a shadow
On the white sea!
Paolo. Will you not read, Francesca?
Francesca. And there is one sail, and so red it seems
Like fire.
Paolo [*reading*]. "'Assuredly, my lady' says
Thereat Galeotto, 'he is not so hot,
He does not ask you any single thing
For love of you, because he fears, but I
Make suit to you for him; and know that I
Had never asked it of you, but that you
Were better off for it, seeing it is
The richest treasure you shall ever compass.'
Whereas says she. . . ."
[Paolo *draws* Francesca *gently by the hand.*]
But now, will you not read
What she says? Will you not be Guenevere?
See now how sweet they are,
Your violets
That you have cast away! Come, read a little.
[*Their heads lean together over the book.*]
Francesca [*reading*]. "Whereat says she: 'This know I well, and I
Will do whatever thing you ask of me.'
And Galeotto answers her: 'Much thanks,
Lady! I ask you that you give to him
Your love. . . .'" [*She stops.*]
Paolo. But read on.
Francesca. No, I cannot see
The words.
Paolo. Read on. It says: "Assuredly. . . ."
Francesca. "'Assuredly,' says she, 'I promise it,
But let him be mine own and I all his,
And let there be set straight all crooked things
And evil. . . .'" Enough, Paolo.
Paolo [*reading: hoarsely and tremulously*].
"'Lady!' says he, 'much thanks, but kiss him then,
Now, and before my face, for a beginning
Of a true love. . . .'" You, you! what does she say?
Now, what does she say? Here.
[*Their white faces lean over the book, until their cheeks almost touch.*]
Francesca [*reading*]. "Says she: 'For what
Shall I be then entreated. But I will it
More than he wills it . . .'"
Paolo [*following brokenly*]. "And they draw apart
And the queen looks on him and sees that he
Cannot take heart on him to do aught more.
Thereat she takes him by the chin, and slowly
Kisses him on the mouth. . . ."
[*He makes the same movement towards* Francesca, *and kisses her. As their mouths separate,* Francesca *staggers and falls back on the cushions.*]
Francesca [*faintly*]. No, Paolo!

ACT FOUR

An octagonal hall, of gray stone, with five of its sides in perspective. High up, on the bare stone, is a frieze of unicorns on a gold background. On the wall at the back is a large window with glass panes, looking out on the mountain, furnished with benches in the recess. On the wall at right angles to it, on the right, is a grated door leading to the subterranean prison. Against the opposite wall, to the left, is a long wooden seat with a high back, in front of which is a long narrow table laid with fruit and wine. In each of the other two sides facing, is a door; the left, near the table, leads to the room of Francesca, *the right to the corridor and stairs. All round are placed torchbearers of iron; on brackets are hung shoulder-belts, waist-belts, quivers, and different portions of armour; pikes, lances, halberds, spears, axes, balistas lean against them.*

[Francesca *is seated at the window, and* Malatestino *stands at her feet.*]

Francesca. You would be justicer, Malatestino!
Your cradle, of a surety, was hewn out
From some old tree-trunk by a savage axe
That had cut many heads off before then.

Malatestino [*laughs convulsively*]. Kinswoman, do I fright you?
And should I please you better
If I had had my cradle in the rose
Of a calm lute?
Francesca. You are a cruel boy to take revenge
Upon a falcon!
Why did you kill him, if you held him dear?
Malatestino. Merely for justice' sake.
See, I had let him loose upon a crane,
The crane went up, the falcon followed him
And went up far above him, and under him
Saw a young eagle flying, and he took him
And struck him to the ground, and held him so
Till he had killed him.
I ran to take him, thinking him the crane,
But found it was an eagle.
Then I was angry, and struck off the head
Of the fair falcon who had killed his lord.
Francesca. It was a foolish deed.
Malatestino. But he had killed
His lord. I did but justice.
Francesca. It was a wicked folly, Malatestino.
Malatestino. The fool shall pass, and with the fool his folly,
And the time passes, but not every time.
Francesca. Why do you speak so strangely?
You are athirst for blood
Always, always at watch,
The enemy of all things. In all your words
There is a secret menace;
Like a wild beast you bite
And tear and claw whatever comes your way.
Where were you born? Your mother gave you milk
As to another? And you are so young!
The down is scarcely shadowed on your cheek.
Malatestino [*with sudden violence*].
You are a goad to me,
The thought of you is like a goad to me,
Always. You are my wrath.

[Francesca *rises and moves away from the window, as if to escape from a snare. She stands near the wall against which arms are heaped up.*]

Francesca. Malatestino, enough! Have you no shame?
Your brother will be here.
Malatestino [*following her*].
You strain me like a bow,
That vibrates in an hour
A thousand times, and pierces at a venture.
Your hand is terrible,
That holds my force in it,
And casts it out to wound where it has flown.
I fly you, and you follow.
You are with me suddenly,
Like a sharp storm of rain,
In the fields and on the ways,
When I go out
Against the enemy.
I breathe you when I breathe the dust of battles.
The cloud that rises from the trampled earth
Takes on your very form,
And you live and breathe and you dissolve again
Under the pawing of the panting horses
In the tracks that redden and fill up with blood.
I will clasp you, I will clasp you now at last!

[Francesca *retreats along the wall until she comes to the grated door.*]

Francesca. You do not touch me, madman, or I call
Your brother! Get you gone. I pity you.
You are a boy. If you would not be whipped,
Get you gone. You are a boy,
A wicked boy.
Malatestino. Whom would you call?
Francesca. Your brother.
Malatestino. Which?

[Francesca *starts, hearing a cry rise up from below, through the door against which she is standing.*]

Francesca. Who cried there? Did you not hear it?
Malatestino. One
Who has to die.
Francesca. Montagna
Dei Parcitadi?

[*Another cry comes from the prison.*]

Malatestino. I too will say: Enough!
Enough, Francesca, to-day you seal your fate.
Francesca. Ah, now I cannot hear him; but at night
He howls, howls like a wolf;
His crying rises to me in my room.
What have you done to him?
Have you put him to the torture?
Malatestino. Listen to me. Giovanni
Sets out at Vespers for the Podesteria
Of Pesaro. You have prepared for him
Food for the journey.
[*He points to the table.*]
Listen. I can give him
Food for another journey.
Francesca. What do you mean?
Malatestino. Look well at me. I can still see with one.
Francesca. What do you mean? You threaten me? You net
Some treachery against your brother.
Malatestino. Treachery?
I would have thought, kinswoman, that such a word
Had burnt your tongue; I see
Your lips are scathless, though
A little paler. I but spoke at random.
My judgment was at fault. Only I say
This one time more. . . .
[*The crying of the* PRISONER *is again heard.*]
Francesca [*trembling with horror*].
How he cries! How he cries!
Who tortures him, or what new agony
Have you found out for him?
Have you walled him up alive? Will he cry so
All his life long? Go, put an end to it,
And take him from his torture.
I will not hear his crying any more.
Malatestino. Well, I will go. I will see that you shall have
A quiet night and an untroubled sleep,
Because to-morrow you must sleep alone,
While my good brother rides to Pesaro.
[*He goes up to the wall and chooses an axe from among the weapons piled up against it.*]
Francesca. What are you doing?
Malatestino. I?
I would be justicer,
And by your wish and will,
Kinswoman.
[*He examines the blade of the weapon; then unbolts the barred door, which opens upon black darkness.*]
Francesca. You are going to kill him? Ah,
Wild beast, but you have lived too long, I think,
Since I bound up your wound for you, and you
Raved at your father. Still I hear you. Then
You bit the hand that gave you medicine,
Cared for you in your sickness, soothed your pain.
Accursed be the hour in which I bent
Over your pillow to give ease to you!
Malatestino. Francesca, listen, Francesca: even so sure
As death is in the point of this good weapon
I hold here in my hand, so sure is life
In that one word
You still may say to me,
Full-blooded life, do you not understand?
And full of winds, and full of conquering days.
[FRANCESCA *replies slowly, in an equable voice, as in a momentary respite from horror and anxiety.*]
Francesca. What is the word? Who is there that could say it?
You live in a loud noise,
But where I live is silence. The prisoner
Is not so far and lonely
As you are far and lonely, O poor blind
Slaughterman, drunk with shoutings, and with blows!
But fate is very silent.
Malatestino. Ah, if you could but see the countenance
Of the overhanging fate!
There is a wretched knot within my head,
A knot of thoughts like pent-up lightnings: soon
They will break out. But listen,
Listen! If your hand will but touch my hand,
If your hair will lean over me again,
Over my fever, and . . .
[*A more prolonged cry is heard from below.*]
Francesca. O horror! horror!
[*She moves back to the embrasure of the window, sits down, and*

puts her elbows on her knees, and her head between her hands.]

Malatestino [*looking aside at her*].
This shall be from you.

[*He takes down a torch, puts the axe on the ground, takes the steel, strikes it, and lights the torch, while he speaks.*]

I go. You will not hear him any more.
I will see that you shall have
A quiet night and an untroubled sleep,
And I will give my father quiet too;
He fears his flight. And I would have Giovanni
In passing by Gradara, give him this
Most certain token.
O kinswoman, good vespers!

[Francesca *remains motionless as if hearing nothing. He picks up the weapon and goes into the darkness with his silent cat-like step, holding the lighted torch in his left hand. The little door remains open.* Francesca *rises and watches the light fade away in the opening; suddenly she runs to the door, and stops, shuddering. The barred door grates in the silence. She turns, and moves away with slow steps, her head bent, as if under a heavy weight.*]

Francesca [*in a low voice, to herself*].
And an untroubled sleep!

[*Through the great door on the right is heard the harsh voice of* Gianciotto. Francesca *stops suddenly.*]

Giovanni. Look you for Messer Paolo my brother,
And tell him I set out for Pesaro
In an hour's time from now,
And that I wait him.

[*He enters fully armed. Seeing his wife, he goes up to her.*]

Ah, my dear lady, you are waiting me!
Why do you tremble, why are you so pale?

[*He takes her hands.*]

And you are cold too, cold as if with fear.
But why?

Francesca. Malatestino
Had scarcely entered when I heard again
The crying of the prisoner,
Who cries these many days so horribly
Out of the earth; and, seeing me distraught,
Flamed into anger and went suddenly
Down to the prison by the door there, armed
With a great axe, saying that he would kill him,
Against the express commandments of his father
That fretted him too much.
Cruel he is, your brother, my good lord,
And does not love me.

Gianciotto. Do not tremble, lady.
Where has your valiance gone? But now you were
Fearless among the fighters,
And saw men fall with arrows in their throats,
And flung about the Greek fire in your hands.
Why does the life, then, of an enemy
So greatly trouble you? and a cry affright you,
Or an axe brandished?

Francesca. To fight in battle is a lovely thing,
But secret slaying in the dark I hate.

Gianciotto. Malatestino tired of keeping watch
So long, and so long waiting for the ransom
That the old Parcitade would not pay,
The old foul miser that in taking flight
Took with him certain rights and privileges
Of the Commune at Rimino . . . But why
Do you say he does not love you?

Francesca. I do not know. It seems so.

Gianciotto. Is he unkind with you?

Francesca. He is a boy, and like
Young mastiffs, he must bite. But come, my lord,
Take food and drink
Before you go your journey.

Gianciotto. But perhaps
Malatestino . . .

Francesca. Come, why do you think
Of what I said but lightly? "Heart of metal,
Tough liver:" I remember your own word,
And when you said it. He will love his horse
Until the horse falls sick;
His armour, till the steel begins to wear.
I have no mind to trouble you with him,
My lord. 'Tis almost vespers.
Come, here is food and drink. Do you mean to go
The way of the seashore?

[Gianciotto *is moody, while he follows* Francesca *towards the*

spread table. He takes off his basnet, unclasps his gorget, and gives them to his wife, who sets them down on a seat, with sudden graceful movements, talking rapidly.]

You will have all the freshness of the night.
It is September, and the nights are soft;
Just before midnight the moon rises. When
Do you reach Pesaro,
Messere il Podestà?

Gianciotto. To-morrow at the third hour,
For I must stay a little with my father
In passing through Gradara.

[*He unbuckles his sword-belt and gives it to his wife.*]

Francesca. Is it for long that you must stay at Pesaro,
Before you come again?

[*The terrible cry of* MONTAGNA *is heard from below.* FRANCESCA *shudders, and lets fall the sword, which slips from its scabbard.*]

Gianciotto. It is done now.
Do not be frightened, lady. There will be
Nothing but silence now. May God so take
The heads of all our enemies! From this forth
There shall no wind root into Rimino
This evil seed between the stones of it.
And may God scatter it out of all Romagna
In this most bloody year, if it so be
He wills to have his holy Easter held
By the Guelfs of Calboli with the Ghibelline blood
Of Aldobrandin degli Argogliosi!

[*He stoops and picks up the bare blade.*]

Pope
Martino is dead and good King Carlo went
Before him into paradise. That's ill!
As for this Pietro di Stefano that Onorio
Sends us for governor,
I doubt him, he's no friend,
He's not a Polentani, not your father's,
Francesca. We shall still have need to keep
Our swords unsheathed, and eyes in all our swords.

[*He put himself on guard, then looks along the blade from the hilt.*]

This is inflexible!

[*He puts it back in its scabbard.*]

Francesca. Give it to me, my lord,
I will not let it fall
Twice over. And sit down, take food and drink.

[*He gives her the sword and sits down on the bench before the table.*]

Gianciotto. Good so, my own dear lady.
I talk of war to you, now I think
That I have never given you a flower.
Ah, we are hard. I give you arms in heaps
To hold in those white hands,
Malatestino gave to you at least
A falcon. Paolo gives you
Flowers perhaps. The Captain of the People
Learnt all the courteous virtues in his Florence,
But left his force upon the banks of Arno
And now is more in love with idleness
Than any labour. He is always with
His music-makers.

[*He breaks the bread and pours out the wine, while* FRANCESCA *sits besides him, at the table, with her hands on the hilt of the sword.*]

But you,
Francesca, love your chamber-music too.
Are not your women ever tired of singing?
Their voices must have covered
The cries of Parcitade,
Surely? You turn the tower
Of the Malatesti
Into a singing wood of nightingales.

[*He eats and drinks.*]

Francesca. I and Samaritana,
My sister, at Ravenna, in our home,
Lived always, always in the midst of singing.
Our mother had indeed a throat of gold.
From our first infancy
Music flowed over us and bent our souls
As the water bends the grass upon the bank.
And our mother said to me:
Sweet singing can put out all harmful things.

Gianciotto. My mother said to us:
Do you know what woman is a proper woman?
She that in spinning thinks upon the spindle,
She that in spinning spins without a knot,
She that in spinning lets not fall the spindle,
She that winds thread in order about thread,
She that knows when the spindle is full or halfway.

Francesca. Then why did you not seek for such a woman,
My lord, through all the country?
[*A knocking is heard at the little barred door.* FRANCESCA *rises to her feet, drops the sword on the table and turns to go out.*]
Malatestino back!
I will not wait to see him.
The Voice of Malatestino. Who has shut it?
Kinswoman are you there? Have you shut me in?
[*He kicks at the door.*]
Gianciotto. Wait, wait, and I will open!
The Voice of Malatestino. Ah, Giovanni!
Open, and I will bring you
A good ripe heavy fruit,
Food for your journey:
A ripe September fig.
And how it weighs!
[GIANCIOTTO *goes to the door to open it.* FRANCESCA *follows his limping steps for some instants with her eyes, then moves towards the door that leads to her rooms, and goes out.*]
Be quick!
Gianciotto. Why, here I am.
[*He opens the door, and* MALATESTINO *appears in the narrow doorway holding in his left hand the lighted torch, in his right, by a knotted cord, the head of* MONTAGNA *wrapped in a cloth.*]
Malatestino [*handing the torch to his brother*].
Here, brother, put it out.
[GIOVANNI *stamps out the flame under his foot.*]
Was not your wife
With you?
Gianciotto [*roughly*]. She was with me.
What do you want of her?
Malatestino. Ah, then you know
What fruit it is I am bringing to your table?
Gianciotto. Did you not fear to disobey our father?
Malatestino. Feel how it weighs! now feel!
[*He hands the bundle to* GIOVANNI, *who weighs it in his hand, and lets it fall on the pavement with a dull thud.*]
It is yours; it is the head
Of Montagna dei Parcitadi; take it.
It is for your saddle bow,
For you to carry with you to Gradara
And leave it with our father, and say to him:
"Malatestino sends you
This token, lest you doubt his guardianship,
And pledges you his word
He will not let the prisoner escape;
And asks you in return
The three foot black white-spotted horse you said
That you would give him,
With saddle set with gold."
How hot it is!
[*He wipes the sweat from his forehead.* GIANCIOTTO *has seated himself again at the table.*]
I tell you,
When the light struck upon his eyes, he snorted,
As a horse does when it shies. Give me to drink.
[*He drains a cup that stands full.* GIANCIOTTO *seems gloomy, and chews in silence, without swallowing, like an ox ruminating. The slayer of* MONTAGNA *sits where* FRANCESCA *had been sitting. The blood-stained bundle lies on the pavement; through the window can be seen the sun as it sets behind the Apennines, crimsoning the peaks and the clouds.*]
You are not wroth with me?
You did not want to have us wait a year
In hopes of ransom from the Perdecittade?
I tell you we should not have had the ransom,
Sure as a florin's yellow.
From this day backwards
The Malatesti never have given quarter,
Since they first cut their teeth.
It is not two months now, at Cesena, our father
Just saved his skin by a mere miracle
From the clutches of Corrado Montefeltvo.
And the bastard Filipuccio is still living!
Heaven bless and save
Frate Alberigo,
Who knows full well the way to spare at once
Both trunk and branches!
It is time now for every Ghibelline
To come to his desert,

As the gay Knight would have us.
[*He takes the sword lying across the table, and strikes the scabbard with his hand.*]
And here is the dessert for every feast
Of peace and amity.
Do not be wroth with me,
Giovanni, I am yours.
Are you not called the Lamester
And am I not the One-eyed? . . .
[*He is silent an instant, deceitfully.*]
But Paolo is the Beautiful!
[GIANCIOTTO *lifts his head and gazes fixedly at* MALATESTINO. *In the silence is heard the jingling of his spurs as he moves his foot restlessly on the floor.*]
Gianciotto. You are a babbler too?
[MALATESTINO *is about to pour out more wine. His brother arrests his hand.*]
No, do not drink,
But answer me. What is it you have done
To vex Francesca?
What have you done to her?
Malatestino. I! What is it she says?
Gianciotto. You have changed colour.
Malatestino. What is it she says?
Gianciotto. Answer me now!
Malatestino [*pretending to be confused*].
I cannot answer you.
Gianciotto. What do you harbour against her in your mind?
Malatestino [*with a gleam in his eye*].
She told you this? And did she not change colour
While she was saying it?
Gianciotto. Enough, Malatestino!
Look at me in the eyes.
I limp in going, but I go straight before me.
You go a crooked way, and you smooth out
The sound your feet have made. Only, take heed
I do not set my mind upon you. There
You would writhe your best in vain.
So now I say to you:
Woe to you if you touch my lady! You,
You should know, having seen me at the work,
That a less time it is
Between the touch of the spur and the first leap
Of the Barbary horse
Than between my saying and doing. Think of it.

Malatestino [*in a low voice, with downcast eye*].
And if the brother sees that there is one
That touches of a truth his brother's wife,
And is incensed at it, and stirs himself
To wipe the shame out, does he therefore sin?
And if, for this, he is accused to have
Harboured ill thought against the woman, say:
Is the accusation just?
(GIANCIOTTO *springs up and raises his fists as if to crush the youth. But he restrains himself, his arms fall.*]
Gianciotto. Malatestino, scourge of hell, if you
Would have me not put out
The other eye by which your blinking soul
Offends the world, speak now,
And tell me what it is that you have seen.
[MALATESTINO *rises and goes with his silent, cat-like steps to the door near the table. He listens for some instants; then opens the door suddenly with a swift movement, and looks. He sees no one. He goes back to his brother's side.*]
Speak.
Malatestino. Not for threats. You frighten me, I say.
Because I wore no visor, I was made
Blind of one eye; but you must wear indoors
Visor and headpiece, chin-piece, eye-piece, all
Of tempered steel, without a flaw in it!
You will see nothing, nothing can come through
The iron-barred approaches to your brain.
Gianciotto. Come, come, the thing! None of your talk! The thing!
Tell me what you have seen! Tell me the man!
Malatestino. Were you nowise surprised
When some one who had gone away from here
No later than December, suddenly
Gave up his post at Florence
And was already back by February?
[*One of the silver cups is heard to crack, as it is crushed in* GIANCIOTTO'S *hand.*]

Gianciotto. Paolo? No, no. It is not.

[*He rises, leaves the table, and walks to and fro in the room, grimly, with overclouded eyes. He stumbles against the blood-stained bundle. He goes towards the window, whose panes glitter in the light of the setting sun. He sits down on the window-seat, and takes his head between his hands, as if to collect his thoughts.* MALATESTINO *plays with the sword, drawing it half in and half out of the scabbard.*]

Malatestino, here!

[*The youth comes across to him swiftly, almost without sound, as if his feet were shod with felt.* GIANCIOTTO *enfolds him in his arms, and holds him tightly between his armoured knees, and speaks to him breath to breath.*]

Are you sure? Have you seen this?

Malatestino. Yes.

Gianciotto. How and when?

Malatestino. I have seen him often enter . . .

Gianciotto. Enter where?

Malatestino. Enter the room.

Gianciotto. Well? That is not enough.
He is a kinsman. They might talk together.
There are the women. . . . You have seen him go
With the musicians, it may be . . .

Malatestino. At night.

For God's sake, do not hurt me! Not so hard!
You have your iron gauntlets. Let me go.

[*He writhes in his grasp.*]

Gianciotto. Have I heard right? You said . . .
Say it again.

Malatestino. At night,
At night, I say, I have seen him.

Gianciotto. If you should lie, I will break
Your body in two.

Malatestino. At night,
I have seen him enter, and go out at dawn.
You were in arms against the Urbinati.

Gianciotto. I will break you, if you lie.

Malatestino. Would you like to see and feel?

Gianciotto. I must do so.
If you have any will to go alive
Out of these mortal pincers.

Malatestino. Then, to-night?

Gianciotto. To-night, then.

Malatestino. But can you find out the way
To cheat, to smile? Ah, no, you cannot smile.

Gianciotto. Let my revenge teach me the way to smile,
If my delight could never.

Malatestino. Can you kiss
Both, one after the other, and not bite
Instead?

Gianciotto. Yes, I will kiss them, thinking them
Already dead.

Malatestino. You must put both your arms
About them, you must talk to them, and not
Tremble.

Gianciotto. Ah, you are playing with my sorrow!
Beware! it has two edges.

Malatestino. Do not hurt me,
For God's sake!

Gianciotto. Good; but tell me how you think:
The way, and speedily.

Malatestino. You must take your leave,
And go from here, take horse, and by the gate
Of San Genesio with all your escort
Set out for Pesaro. I will come with you.
You will say you are wroth with me
For the Parcitade's head's sake, and desire
To take me to our father at Gradara,
That he may punish me or pardon me.
So they will think
That they are left alone. Do you understand?
Then, half-way through the night,
We will leave the escort, and come back again,
And enter by the gate of the Gattolo
Before the moon is up. We will give the signal
To Rizio. But let me dispose of that.
Saddle your swiftest horse, and take with you
A little linen
To bind about his hoofs, in case of need,
Because at night the stones
Upon the noisy way
May well be traitors, brother.

Gianciotto. Then shall I see?
You are sure? Then I shall take them in the act. . . .
Malatestino. Not so hard! Now I think,
There is the slave, there is the Cyprian slave. . . .
She is their go-between.
Sly is she, works with charms. . . .
I have seen her as she goes
Snuffing the wind. . . . I must find a way to lead her
Into a snare, and blindfold her. But this,
Leave this to me: you need not think of anything
Till you are at the door.
Gianciotto. On your life now, shall I take them in the act?
Malatestino. Enough of this, by God!
Let me go, now, let me go! I am not
Your prey.

[*Through the door is heard the voice of* PAOLO.]

Paolo [*outside*]. Where is Giovanni?

[GIANCIOTTO *lets* MALATESTINO *go, and rises with a white face.*]

Malatestino. Look to it now,
Look to it; no suspicion!

[*As* PAOLO *opens the door and enters,* MALATESTINO *pretends to be angry with* GIANCIOTTO.]

Ah, at last
You have let me go!

[*He pretends to suffer in his wrists.*]

By God, it is well for you
You were born my elder brother, otherwise. . . .
Ah, Paolo, well met!

[PAOLO *wears a long rich surtout falling below his knees nearly to the ankle, girt at the waist by a jewelled belt through which is thrust a beautiful damascened dagger. His curled hair, not parted, but waving in a mass, surrounds his face like a cloud.*]

Paolo. What is the matter?
Malatestino. See,
Giovanni is enraged
Because I have lost all patience at the last
And have struck dumb Montagna, being weary
Of listening to his cries (Francesca too
Could get no sleep) and weary too of hearing
My father say twice over,
By word of mouth and message:
"Will you keep watch on him?
Are you sure you can keep watch?
I know he will escape;
I know that you will let him go, and then,
When he has gone, you will not bring him back!"
By God, I was tired of it. There is his head.
Paolo. You cut it off yourself?
Malatestino. Yes, I myself,
And neatly.

[PAOLO *looks at the bundle, but draws back so as not to stain himself with the dripping blood.*]

Ah, you draw back, it seems
You fear to stain your garments?
I did not know I had
Two sisters, both so dainty!
Gianciotto. Enough of jesting! Paolo,
I have to take him with me to Gradara,
To our father; he must plead
His cause himself,
For disobeying. What do you say to it?
Paolo. I say that it is well for him to go, Giovanni.
Malatestino. I am content.
But I must bear the token;
I will hang it to my saddle: that is staunch.

[*He takes up the bundle by the cord.*]

I have no fear our father will be angry.
He will be filled with joy,
I tell you, when the knots are all untied.
And he will give me the black horse for war,
And maybe the grey jennet for the chase.
Gianciotto. Get ready, then, and without lingering,
It is already evening.

[MALATESTINO *takes up the bundle to carry it away.*]

Paolo [*to Giovanni*].
I see your men are armed at front and back,
And wait the clarion.

[*The two brothers go towards the window lit up by the sunset, and sit down.*]

Malatestino [*going*]. Ah, but how heavy! and without a helmet!
The Parcitadi always were gross oxen,
Fatted for slaughtering, great horned heads.
Ah, Paozzo, where you go
You leave behind a scent of orange-water.

Take care, a drop may drip upon your clothes.

[*He goes out.*]

Paolo. He is all teeth and claws, ready for biting.
Our men at arms used once
To say he always slept with one eye closed
And one eye open, even in his sleep.
Now I believe he never sleeps at all,
Nor slacks the sinews of his cruelty.
He was made to conquer lands, and die some day
Of extreme cold, God keep him, our good brother!
So you are Podestà of Pesaro!
Our father from Gradara scans the hill
Of Pesaro as if he watched his prey.
You, with your strength and wisdom,
Should give it to him soon,
Giovanni.

Gianciotto. It is not a year yet since
You went to Florence, Captain of the People,
And now I go as Podestà. Not long
You stayed at Florence. I shall stay there long,
Because it is not well for me to yield
The office to another. Yet to leave
Francesca for so long,
Goes to my heart a little.

Paolo. You can come back again from time to time,
Pesaro is not far.

Gianciotto. The Podestà is not allowed to leave
His post, so long as lasts
His office, as you know, nor bring with him
His wife. But I will leave her in your care,
Brother, my most dear wife; you will be here.

Paolo. I have held her always
As a dear sister might be held.

Gianciotto. I know,
Paolo.

Paolo. Be very sure
That I will guard her for you well.

Gianciotto. I know,
Paolo. You from Ravenna
Brought her a virgin to your brother's bed
And you will keep her for me from all harm.

Paolo. I will tell Orabile
To leave Ghaggiolo and come
To Rimino to keep her company.

Gianciotto. See that they love each other, Paolo,
For they are kinswomen.

Paolo. Francesca often
Sends gifts to her.

Gianciotto. Go, call her. It is late.
The sun has set, and I shall have to rest
A little at Gradara,
And yet be at the gates
Of Pesaro before the third hour. Go,
Go you yourself and call her. She has gone
Back to her room, because Malatestino
Frightened her with his cruelty. Go you,
Comfort her, tell her not to be afraid
Of being left alone, and call her here.

[*He rises and puts his hand lightly on his brother's shoulder as if to urge him.* PAOLO *goes towards the door.* GIOVANNI *stands motionless, and follows him with murderous eyes. As he goes out,* GIOVANNI *stretches out his hand as if to swear an oath. Then he moves towards the table, and takes up the cracked cup, wishing to hide it. He turns, sees the little barred door still open, throws the cup into the darkness, and closes the door. At the other door* FRANCESCA *appears by the side of* PAOLO.]

Francesca. Pardon me, my dear lord,
If I have left you hastily. You know
The reason.

Gianciotto. My dear lady, I know well
The reason, and I am sorry
That you have had to suffer by the fault
Of this sad brother. And I go to see
Both to your peace and to his punishment,
For I intend to take him to our father,
For judgment at Gradara. He prepares
Already to set forth. Within a little
We shall have left the city.

Francesca. He will bear
Ill-will against me, if you should accuse him
Before his father. Pardon him, I pray.
He is a boy.

Gianciotto. Yet, lady, it is better,
For your sake, that he comes with me. I leave
Paolo with you. Trust Paolo. His Orabile
Will come to stay with you at Rimino,
And keep you company: he promises.
Often from Pesaro

I mean to send you messages, and hope
Often to have the like from Rimino.
Francesca. Surely, my lord. You need not fear for me.
Gianciotto. Put every trouble freely from your mind,
Let songs and music give you joy, and have
Beautiful robes, and lovely odours. Not
To Guido's daughter suits the spinning wheel.
I know it. And I say
My mother's saying but to make you smile.
You are not angry with me?
Francesca. In your saying
There seems to lie secret rebuke for me,
My lord.
Gianciotto. A good old saying, that was born
Within the dark walls of Verrucchio,
That now are grown too narrow to hem in
The Malatesti in our house to-day.
If any spin, they spin
Only the purple, and with golden distaffs.
Come to my arms, my most dear lady!
[FRANCESCA *goes up to him; he takes her in his arms and kisses her.* PAOLO *stands silent in the doorway.*]
Now
I have to say farewell. Never so fair
You seemed to me, never so sweet. And yet
I leave you.
[*He smoothes her hair with his hand; then looses her.*]
O, my brother,
Keep her in safety and heaven keep you both.
Come, and pledge faith with me.
[PAOLO *goes up to him, and they embrace.*]
Where is my gorget?
Francesca. Here it is.
[*She gives it to him.*]
Gianciotto [*putting it on*]. Paolo, buckle it for me.
[PAOLO *buckles it on.* FRANCESCA *hands him the basnet.*]
Do you remember, brother,
That night before the Mastra Tower, that bolt
Out of a crossbow? You,
Francesca, do you remember?
It was at just this hour.
Cignatta was killed then. To-day Montagna
Joins him. 'Tis not a year.
The house is silent now; then, all the towers
Were crackling to the sky.
[FRANCESCA *takes the sword from the table and buckles his sword-belt.*]
Francesca, do you remember? Then you gave us
Wine, Scian wine, to drink. We drank together
Out of one cup.
[*He is fully armed.*]
Now let me drink again!
Francesca. One of the cups is missing. There were two.
Where is the other?
[*She looks to see if it has fallen.*]
Gianciotto. One will do for us
Still.
[*He pours out the wine and offers it to* FRANCESCA.]
And good luck God give you!
Francesca. I cannot drink
This wine, my lord. I am not used to it.
Gianciotto. Drink as you drank then, and pass on the cup
That your kinsman may drink also, as he drank then.
[FRANCESCA *drinks and offers the cup to* PAOLO, *who takes it.*]
Paolo. Good luck to the Podestà of Pesaro!
[*He drinks, throwing back his curled head. Through the door is heard the voice of* MALATESTINO, *who throws open the door, and appears in full armour. From the court is heard the sound of bugles.*]
Malatestino. Ready, Giovanni? Hark, the clarion!
To horse! To horse!

ACT FIVE

The room with the curtained alcove, the musicians' gallery, the lectern, with the book closed. Four waxen torches burn in the iron candlestick; two tapers on the small table. The compartments of the long window are almost all open to the peaceful night air. The pot of basil is on the window-sill, and beside it is a gilt plate heaped with bunches of early grapes.

[FRANCESCA *is seen through the half-drawn curtains of the alcove, lying on the bed, on which she has laid herself without undressing. The* WOMEN, *who wear white fillets, are seated on low stools; they speak quietly, so as not to disturb their mistress. Near them, on a stool, are laid five silver lamps, which have gone out.*]

Adonella. She has fallen asleep. She dreams.

[BIANCOFIORE *rises and goes softly up to the alcove, looks, then turns, and goes back to her seat.*]

Biancofiore. How beautiful she is!

Altichiara. Summer is come; she grows
In beauty with the summer.

Alda. Like ears of corn.

Garsenda. And like
Poppies.

Biancofiore. O, beautiful
Summer, go not away!
The nights begin to grow a little cool.
Do you feel the breeze?

Alda. It comes
From the sea. Oh, the delight!

[*With her face to the window, she draws in a long breath.*]

Adonella. Lord Autumn comes our way
With grass and figs in his lap.

Biancofiore. September! Grape and fig begin to droop.

Altichiara [*pointing to the plate*]. Here, Adonella, take
A bunch of grapes to strip.

Adonella. You are too greedy.

Altichiara. Come, come, your mouth is watering for them.

[ADONELLA *takes a bunch of grapes from the plate, and goes back to her seat, holding the bunch in the air, while the others strip it of its grapes.*]

Biancofiore. It is like sweet muscatel.

Alda. Don't throw away the skin!

Altichiara. It is all good to eat, kernel and skin.

Garsenda. Here is a bitter kernel.

Biancofiore. Grown on the shady side.

Adonella. How still it is!

Alda. How tranquil!

Garsenda. Listen! I hear a galley
Weigh anchor.

Biancofiore. For to-night
Madonna has no singing.

Altichiara. She is weary.

Alda. Why does the prisoner
Cry out no more?

Garsenda. Messer Malatestino has cut off
His head.

Alda. Is that the truth?

Garsenda. The truth; to-day, at Vespers.

Alda. How do you know?

Garsenda. Smaragdi told it me,
And had seen him, too,
Tie something huddled in a cloth to his saddle,
When, with Messer Giovanni
He mounted in the court. It was the head,
The prisoner's head.

Adonella. Where do they carry it?

Altichiara. To whom do they carry it?

Biancofiore. Now they are riding.
By the seashore,
Under the stars,
They and the murdered
Head!

Adonella. Where will they have come?

Alda. They should have come
To hell, and stayed there!

Garsenda. One can breathe in the house
Now they are here no longer,
The lame man and the blind man!

Altichiara. Hush! hush! let not Madonna
Hear you.

Garsenda. She is hardly breathing.

Alda. Messer Paolo
Is back again?

Altichiara. Hush!

[FRANCESCA *groans in her sleep.*]

Adonella. She is wakening.

[*She throws the grape-stalk out of the window.* BIANCOFIORE *again rises, and goes up to the alcove, and looks.*]

Biancofiore. No,
She is not awake; she is crying in her sleep.

Adonella. She is dreaming.

Alda. O Garsenda, does she know
The prisoner is not crying any more
Because they have cut his head off?

Garsenda. Certainly
She knows.

Biancofiore. Perhaps she is dreaming of it now.

Adonella. We must sit up to-night,
Who knows to what hour?

Alda. Are you sleepy, Adonella?

Altichiara. Simonetto, the fifer, is waiting on the stairs!
Adonella. Who waits for you, then? Suzzo, the falconer,
With lure of pretty leather?
Alda. Hush! She is wakening.
Biancofiore. And did it bleed, Garsenda?
Garsenda. Bleed? What?
Biancofiore. That bundle at the saddle-bow?
Garsenda. I saw but dimly, for the court was dark
But this I know: Smaragdi had to wash
The pavement, there, in the hall.
Biancofiore. Now they are nearing the Cattolica.
Garsenda. God keep them far away, and let them never
Find their way back again!
Biancofiore. Think of the frightened horse
Feeling the dead thing dangle in the night!
Adonella. How sweetly the sweet basil smells by night!
Altichiara. How thick it grows; the pot
No longer holds it.
Biancofiore. You know, Garsenda, tell us
The story of Lisabetta of Messina,
That loved a youth of Pisa, and how her brothers
Killed him in secret, and she found his body
And cut the head away
From off the shoulders, set it in a pot,
And earth with it, and planted
A sprig of basil plant,
And watered it with her tears,
And saw it blossom so, out of her weeping.
Tell us, Garsenda, very quietly
While we are waiting.

(FRANCESCA *gives a deeper groan, and turns as if half stifled on the bed. The* WOMEN *shiver.*]

Alda. Listen,
She is crying in her sleep. It is some bad dream.
Garsenda. She is sleeping on her back; the nightmare weighs
Upon her breast.
Altichiara. Shall we awake her?
Biancofiore. Evil
It is too suddenly
To rouse the heart that sees.
How should we know
What truth she sees revealed?
Adonella. The Slave interprets all her dreams to her.

[FRANCESCA *utters a cry of terror, springs from the bed, and seems in the act to fly from some savage pursuit, throwing out her hands as if to unloose herself from some grasp.*]

Francesca. No, no, it is not I, it is not I!
Ah, ah, they seize me with their teeth!
Help! help!
They snatch my heart. Help, help!
Paolo!

[*She shudders, stops, and turns on herself, pale, and breathing with difficulty, while her* WOMEN *surround her in consternation, trying to comfort her.*]

Garsenda. Madonna, Madonna, we are here, see, see,
We are here, Madonna.
Altichiara. Do not be afraid!
Adonella. There is no one here; there is no one here but we,
Madonna. No one is harming you, Madonna.
Francesca [*shivering*]. What have I said? Did I call?
O God, what have I done?
Alda. You have had some discomfortable dream,
Madonna.
Garsenda. Now it is finished. We are here.
All's quiet.
Francesca. Is it late?
Biancofiore. The sweat is standing out upon your forehead. [*She wipes it off.*]
Francesca. Is it night yet? Garsenda,
Biancofiore, Alda, you are all in white.
Garsenda. It might perhaps be four hours after midnight,
Madonna.
Francesca. Have I slept so long? Smaragdi,
Where is Smaragdi?
She has not come back yet?
Biancofiore. She has not come back.
Francesca. Why has she not come back?
Biancofiore. When did you send her,
Madonna?
Francesca. Are you not mistaken? Sleep,
Perhaps, deceived you, and you did not see her

When she came in.
Garsenda. Madonna,
No, none of us closed eyelid;
We watched beside you all the night.
Adonella. Perhaps
She has come back, and waits, as she is wont
Lying without the door.
Francesca. Look out and see,
Adonella, see if she is there.
[ADONELLA *draws back the folds of the curtain, opens the door, and looks out.*]
Adonella. Smaragdi!
Smaragdi! There is no answer.
No one is there. It is all dark.
Francesca. But call,
Call her again.
Adonella. Smaragdi!
Francesca. Take a light.
[GARSENDA *takes one of the lamps, lights it at a taper, and goes to the door. She and her companion look around.*]
She should have been here now some time ago.
What harm can have befallen her? God knows what;
It can be no good thing.
Biancofiore. You have not yet
Come quite out of the horror of the dream,
Madonna.
Altichiara. Breathe the air, the night is fresh,
The night is still.
Francesca. The moon
Is risen?
Alda. It must be rising on the hills,
But there is yet no dawn upon the sea.
[ADONELLA *and* GARSENDA *re-enter. One of them puts out the lamp.*]
Francesca [*anxiously*]. Well? Is she there?
Garsenda. Madonna, there is no one.
Adonella. Nothing but silence
And darkness everywhere; the whole house sleeps.
Garsenda. We only saw . . .
[*She hesitates.*]
Francesca. You only saw . . . whom did you see?
Garsenda [*hesitating*]. Madonna,
Some one was there . . . some one was standing there,
Leaning against the wall . . .
Still as a statue . . . all alone . . . his girdle
Shining . . . Madonna, do not be afraid . . .
[*Goes near to her and lowers her voice.*]
It was Messer Paolo!
Francesca [*startled*]. O, why?
Adonella. Madonna
Will have her hair made ready for the night?
Francesca. No, no, I am not sleepy. I will wait.
Biancofiore. Her shoes unloosed?
Alda. The perfumes?
Francesca. I will wait
A little more. I am no longer sleepy.
I will wait until Smaragdi comes.
Altichiara. Let me go
And seek her.
Garsenda. The poor thing is tired perhaps,
At the day's end, and sleeps where she has dropped.
Perhaps she is lying now
Upon the stairs.
Francesca. Go, go, and I will read
Till you return. Bring me a taper, Alda.
[ALDA *takes a taper and fixes it at the head of the reading-desk.*]
Go now. You are all in white!
The Summer is not dead?
When it was evening, did you see the swallows
Begin to fly away?
I was elsewhere,
I was looking on the hills,
When the sun set to-night.
They have not all flown yet, have they? But perhaps
To-morrow all the other flocks will follow.
I will go up on the tower, to see them go,
And you will sing me a merry song men dance to,
As if 'twere the March calends. Have you still
The flight of swallows painted, as you had?
Alda. Yes, Madonna.
Francesca. To-morrow at the dance
You will put on
Over these white
Dresses a vest of black.
You will be like
"The creature of delight."
Biancofiore. Yes, Madonna.
Francesca. Go, go! [*She opens the book.*]
[*Each of the* WOMEN *takes her silver lamp, which swings from a*

curved handle. First ADONELLA *goes to the tall candlestick, and, standing on tiptoe, lights her lamp at one of the torches. She bows, and goes out, while* FRANCESCA *follows her with her eyes.*]

Go, too, Adonella!

[GARSENDA *does the same.*]

And you, Garsenda.

[ALTICHIARA *does the same.*]

And you, too, Altichiara.

[ALDA *does the same.*]

And you, Alda.

[*The four have gone out, one by one.* BIANCOFIORE *remains, and she also is about to light her lamp, but as she is shorter than the others, she cannot reach the flame.*]

Oh, Biancofiore, what a little one!
You will not ever reach to light your lamp.
You are the gentlest of them. Little dove,

[BIANCOFIORE *turns smiling.*]

Come!

[BIANCOFIORE *goes up to her.* FRANCESCA *caresses her hair.*]

It is all of gold. You are, I think,
A little like my sister; you remember her,
Samaritana?

Biancofiore. Yes, indeed, Madonna.

Such sweetness cannot be forgot. I have her
Here, in my heart, with the angels.

Francesca. She was sweet,
My sister; was she not sweet, Biancofiore?
Ah, if she were but here, if she might make
Her little bed beside my bed to-night!
If I might hear again
Her little naked feet run to the window,
If I might hear her run with naked feet,
My little dove, and say, and say to me:
"Francesca, now the morning-star is born,
And it has chased away the Pleiades!"

Biancofiore. You weep, Madonna.

Francesca. You tremble, Biancofiore.
She too was frightened of a sudden; I heard
Her heart beat; and she said to me: "O sister,
Listen to me: stay with me still, O stay
With me! we were born here:
Do not forsake me!"
And I said to her: "O take me,
And let me be with you,
And let one covering cover us!"

Biancofiore. O Madonna,
Your words pierce through my heart,
What melancholy holds you
Still?

Francesca. No, no, do not weep:
Gentle you are. But come, light your lamp here.

Biancofiore. May I not stay with you?
May I not sleep
Here, at the foot of the bed?

Francesca. No, Biancofiore. Light your lamp, and go,
And God go with you. Now Samaritana,
It may be, is thinking of her sister.

[BIANCOFIORE *lights her lamp at the taper, and bends to kiss* FRANCESCA'S *hand.*]

Go,
Go, do not weep. Let all sad thoughts go by.
To-morrow you shall sing to me. Now go.

[BIANCOFIORE *turns and walks slowly towards the door. As she is going out,* FRANCESCA *gives way to her presentiment.*]

You are not going, Biancofiore?

Biancofiore. No,
I will stay with you, Madonna. Let me stay
At least until Smaragdi has come back.

Francesca [*hesitates an instant*]. Go!

Biancofiore. God keep you, Madonna.

[*She goes out, closing the door behind her. Left alone,* FRANCESCA *makes several steps towards the door; then stands still, listening.*]

Francesca. And let it be so if it is my fate.

[*Goes resolutely up to the door.*]

I will call him.

[*Hesitates and draws back.*]

He is still there, and he stands
Leaning against the wall;
Still as a statue, all alone; his girdle
Shining in the shadow. Who said that to me?
Who was it? Was it not said long ago?
Within the helmet all the face like fire . . .

[*Visions pass before her soul in a flash.*]

He is silent, and the lances
Of the spearmen round him.

He stands, and the arrow whistles through his hair.
He is cleansed from the pollution of the guile.
He drains the long draught, throwing back his head.
Ah, now all's gone again!
The enemy holds fast
The secret and the sword.
"The executioner
I make me of your will."
But iron shall not divide the lips, but flame
Shall not divide the lips.
[*She wanders to and fro, wretched and feverish.*]
The utmost flame of fire shall not divide them.
[*She takes up the silver mirror and looks at herself in it.*]
O silence, and still water, sepulchre,
Pale sepulchre of my face!
What is this voice that says
I never was more beautiful than now?
"And in the solitude that was on fire
With your eyes, I have lived
With so swift energy,
Travailing secretly." . . .
One voice alone cries out
On the topmost of my heart,
And all the blood flies. . . . Ah!
[*She starts, hearing a light knocking at the door. She puts down the mirror, blows out the taper with a breath, goes to the door, tottering, and calls, in a low voice.*]
Smaragdi! Smaragdi!
Paolo [*voice heard*]. Francesca!
[*She flings the door open vehemently. With a craving as of thirst she throws herself into the arms of her lover.*]
Francesca. Paolo! Paolo!
[*He is dressed as at Vespers; his head is bare.*]
Paolo. Life of my life, never was my desire
So ardent for you. In my heart I felt
A dying down
Of the bright spirits that live within your eyes.
My forces ebbed away into the night,
Out of my breast, a flood
Terrible, clangorous,
And fear took hold upon my soul, as when
In that sealed hour,
You put me to the test, God witnessing,
The test of the arrow,
And raised me there whither although he wills it
No man returns by willing to return.
Is it not morning, is it not morning yet?
The stars have all gone down into your hair,
Scattered about the confines of the shades,
Where life may never find them!
[*He kisses her hair passionately again and again.*]
Francesca. Pardon me,
Pardon me! Far away
You come before me,
Far off and silent,
With fixed, dry eyeballs, as upon that day
Between the inflexible lances of the fight.
A hard sleep falling on me like a blow
Scattered my soul
As a stem breaks, and then I seemed to lie
Lost on the stones. And then there came to me
The dream that long while now
I have seen in sleep, the strange
Dream that has tortured me;
And I was full of many terrors, full
Of terrors; and my women
Saw me, and how I trembled,
And how I wept . . .
Paolo. O, wept!
Francesca. Pardon me, pardon me,
Sweet friend! You have awakened me from sleep,
Freed me from every anguish.
It is not morning yet,
The stars have not gone down into the sea,
The summer is not over, and you are mine,
And I, I am all yours,
And this is perfect joy
The passion of the ardour of our life.
[Paolo *kisses her insatiably.*]
Paolo. You shivered?
Francesca See, the door
Is open, and there passes
The breath of the night. Do you not feel it too?
This is the hour,
The hour of silence,
That sheds the dew of night

Upon the manes
Of horses on the roads.
But shut the door.
[Paolo *shuts the door.*]
Paolo, did you see with your own eyes
The horsemen as they went away?
Paolo. Yes, yes,
I watched them from the tower, for a long while
Until the last lance faded
Into the dark, and I could see no more.
Come, come, Francesca! Many hours of gladness
We have before us,
With the wild melody of unknown winds
And the swift ravishment of solitude
In fire, and the violent
River without a goal,
And the immortal thirst;
But now this hour that flies
Fills me with lust to live
A thousand lives,
In the quiver of the air that kisses you,
In the short breath of the sea,
In the fury of the world,
That not one thing
Of all the infinite things
That are in you
Lie hid from me,
And I die not before I have ploughed up
Out of your depths
And relished to its infinite root in you
My perfect joy.
[*He draws her towards the cushions by the windows.*]
Francesca. Kiss me upon my eyes, upon my brow,
Upon my cheeks, my throat,
So . . . so . . .
Stay, and my wrists, my fingers . . .
So . . . so . . . And take my soul and pour it out,
Because the breath of the night
Turns back my soul again
To things of long ago,
And the low voices of the night turn back
My soul to things that were,
And joys enjoyed are they that now weigh down
My heart, and as you were
I see you still, and not as you shall be,
My fair friend, my sweet friend.
Paolo. I will carry you where all things are forgot,
And no more time made slave
Is lord of our desire.
Then shall the day and night
Be mingled even as one
Upon the earth as upon one sole pillow;
Then shall the hands of dawn
No more unclasp from one another's holding
The dusky arms and the white arms of them,
Nor yet untwist
The tangles of their hair and veins.
Francesca. It says
Here in the book, here where you have not read:
"We have been one life; it were a seemly thing
That we be also one death."
Paolo. Let the book
Be closed!
[*He rises, closes the book on the reading-desk, and blows out the taper.*]
And read in it no more. Not there
Our destiny is written, but in the stars,
That palpitate above
As your throat palpitates,
Your wrists, your brow,
Perhaps because they were your garland once,
Your necklet when you went
Burningly through the ways of heaven? From what
Vineyard of earth were these grapes gathered in?
They have the smell
Of drunkenness and honey,
They are like veins, they are swollen with delight,
Fruits of the night! The flaming feet of Love
Shall tread them in the winepress. Give me your mouth
Again! again!
[Francesca *lies back on the cushions, forgetful of everything. All at once, in the dead silence, a violent shock is heard on the door, as if some one hurled himself against it. The lovers start up in terror, and rise to their feet.*]
The Voice of Gianciotto. Francesca, open! Francesca!
[Francesca *is petrified with terror.* Paolo *looks round the room,*

putting his hand to his dagger. He catches sight of the bolt of the trap-door.]

Paolo [*in a low voice*]. Take heart, take heart, Francesca! I will get down
By the way of the trap-door.
Go, go, and open to him.
But do not tremble.

[*He lifts the trap-door. The door seems to quiver at the repeated blows.*]

The Voice of Gianciotto. Open, Francesca, open!

Paolo. Open to him! Go now.
I wait beneath. If he but touches you
Cry out and I am with you.
Go boldly, do not tremble!

[*He begins to go down, while* FRANCESCA *in obedience to him goes to open the door, tottering.*]

The Voice of Gianciotto. Open! upon your life, Francesca, open!

[*The door being opened* GIANCIOTTO, *armed, and covered with dust, rushes furiously into the room, looking for his brother in every direction. Suddenly he catches sight of* PAOLO, *standing head and shoulders above the level of the floor, struggling to free himself from the bolt of the trap-door, which has caught in a corner of his cloak.* FRANCESCA *utters a piercing cry, while* GIANCIOTTO *falls upon his brother, seizing him by the hair, and forcing him to come up.*]

Gianciotto. So, you are caught in a trap,
Traitor! They are good to have you by the hair,
Your ringlets!

Francesca [*rushing forward*]. Let him go!
Let him go! Me, take me!

[*The husband loosens his hold.* PAOLO *springs up on the other side of the trap-door, and unsheathes his dagger.* GIANCIOTTO, *drawing back, bares his sword, and rushes upon him with terrible force.* FRANCESCA *throws herself between the two men; but as her husband has leant all his weight on the blow, and is unable to draw back, her breast is pierced by the sword, she staggers, turns on herself, towards* PAOLO, *who lets fall his dagger, and catches her in his arms.*]

Francesca [*dying*]. Ah, Paolo!

[GIANCIOTTO *pauses for an instant. He sees the woman clasped in the arms of her lover, who seals her expiring life with his lips. Mad with rage and sorrow, he pierces his brother's side with another deadly thrust. The two bodies sway to and fro for an instant without a sound. Then, still linked together, they fall at full length on the pavement.* GIANCIOTTO *stoops in silence, bends his knee with a painful effort, and, across the other knee, breaks his blood-stained sword.*]

THE END

ELECTRA

By BENITO PEREZ GALDOS

Translated from the Spanish

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BENITO PEREZ GALDOS AND HIS PLAYS

Benito Perez Galdos, the author of *Electra,* was born in Las Palmas, in the Canary Islands, in 1845. He studied law and practiced journalism in Madrid, but soon found himself in literature. Fame first came to him with his novels. Of these *Doña Perfecta,* at least, which embodies a struggle similar to that in *Electra,* has been translated into many languages. He was fifty-five years old when he took to the theatre. Between 1900 and 1918 he wrote twenty-one plays, of which *Electra, The Grandfather, The Duchess of San Quentin,* and *Life and Spirit* are probably the most important. Galdos died in Madrid in 1921, the most famous and beloved of Spain's contemporary writers.

Galdos is undoubtedly the principal dramatist of Spain between the great days three centuries ago and Benavente. Echegaray, almost twenty years his senior as a dramatist, is his only possible rival. But Echegaray, though modern in some of his ideas, and striving toward modernism in technique, appears insincere, violent, and melodramatic compared with Galdos. He strains for effects; his passion seems laid on from the outside; his Ibsenism sounds foreign both to Spain and to the man himself, and rarely rings true. Galdos, too, is influenced by Ibsen; but to him Ibsen has simply suggested a point of view, a disposition to question current ideas and conventions, a willingness to break bonds and to go further afield in thought. He is the worthy forerunner of Benavente, who is more completely emancipated, though not more honest and sincere. He is a modernist in his perception of the trend of thought, the conflict between science and medieval concepts and practices, and the coming of a new social order. Such in general are the point of view and purpose that largely dictate his choice of material. His technique is not so modern. It is true that he disdained the artificiality of the well-made play, and refused to be bound by rules. That is well enough. But he inherits from his Spanish past, even as far back as Lope da Vega, relics of the old romanticism—secrets and revelations, hidden or lost letters or other documents—and like devices of structure. Again, he writes plays like a novelist. Over fifty years old when he came to playwriting, he brought with him a fully matured and fixed novelistic technique. His minor figures, for instance, are elaborately characterized, out of all proportion to their importance in the action. He introduces scenes for their own sake alone, without reference to their relation to his plot. He comments and analyzes delightfully but not dramatically. Yet his plays themselves, though often rather loose in structure, atone by their merits for their minor deficiencies. Galdos is a master of dialogue that is weighty with suggestion or is instinct with spirit and wit. His characters are interesting, clearly-defined individuals. His scenes of conflict between will and will spring inevitably from the very essence of his theme. Simply as a thinker, he is strikingly courageous. He is a hardy and praiseworthy pioneer.

Electra is characteristic of Galdos' method and material. The entire play is a symbol of the struggle between modern science and the Church for the possession of Spain, in which Electra is obviously Spain herself; Pantoja is the clerical party, against whom are arrayed Cuestra (modern business), the Marquis (the old aristocracy with progressive ideas), and Maximo (modern science). The theme is of course peculiarly Spanish, but the remarkable power of Galdos carries the conflict beyond national bounds, and presents in the leading figures of the play characters of universal interest and significance.

When *Electra* was first produced (in Madrid, on January 30, 1901), it created a sensation that rapidly spread from the capital to the provinces. The play was considered by the conservative party as an attack upon the church. Maria Guerrero, the most famous Spanish actress of the day, had refused to take the title rôle, maintaining that art should not stoop to controversy. Riots occurred in the provincial cities upon the presentation of the play; on one occasion the actors were refused lodging and had to spend the night in the streets. Gradually the opposition died down. It was perceived that *Electra* was not an attack upon religion, but only upon certain practices that called for reform.

CHARACTERS

Electra (*18 years of age*)
Evarista (*50*), *wife of Don Urbano*
Maximo (*35*)
Don Salvador Pantoja (*50*), *a religious fanatic*
The Marquis de Ronda (*58*)
Don Leonardo Cuesta, *broker* (*50*)
Don Urbano García Yuste (*55*), *brother of Lazaro Yuste, the late father of Maximo*
Mariano, *laboratory assistant*
Gil, *accountant*
Balbina, *old maid-servant*
Patros, *young maid-servant*
José, *old man-servant*
Sister Dorothy
A Workman
The Shade of Eleuteria

The action takes place in Madrid, at the present time.

ELECTRA

ACT ONE

Luxurious Drawing Room in the palace of DON URBANO GARCÍA YUSTE. *At the right, passage-way to garden. At the rear, doors into other rooms of the house. In front, to the right, the door of* ELECTRA'S *room.*

José. [*In the rear.*] They are in the garden. I'll go and tell them.

Marquis. Wait, I want to look at this drawing-room. I haven't paid my respects to the García Yustes since they moved into their new palace. . . . What luxury! . . . How free they are with their wealth! Providence surely gives them full measure and running over into their bosom! Yet what is this lavish expenditure, compared with what they dedicate to charity? How generous they are!

José. To be sure, my Lord.

Marquis. And always unpretentious! What's more, they have, I think, a very interesting addition to the family. . . .

José. Addition? Ah! Yes, of course! You refer to . . .?

Marquis. Listen, José. Will you do what I tell you?

José. My lord Marquis knows I never forget how I served him fourteen years. . . . Let your lordship command.

Marquis. Very well; I came here to-day for the sole purpose of meeting this young lady whom your master and mistress brought home a short while ago from boarding school in France.

José. The Señorita Electra.

Marquis. Can you tell me whether they are satisfied with her? Whether the girl seems affectionate, grateful?

José. Oh, yes; they are fond of her, although she is—

Marquis. Out with it—

José. The girl is wild and full of mischief.

Marquis. Yet at her age—

José. She is full of life, full of spirits, my lord.

Marquis. They say she is very pretty, an angel.

José. An angel, well, if there are angels like devils! She drives us all mad.

Marquis. How I should like to know her!

José. Your lordship will find her in the garden. She spends all the morning at her roguish pranks.

Marquis. [*Looking at the garden.*] Beautiful grounds, really a park! The ancient demesne of the old palace of the Gravelinas.

José. Yes, my lord.

Marquis. The fine apartment house yonder—doesn't it belong to your master also?

José. Yes, opening on the garden, and on the other street also. The ground floor is taken up by the laboratory of our master's nephew, young Don Maximo, the highest authority of Spain, in mathematics, and in—in—

Marquis. Yes; the man they call "the Marvellous Magician." I met him in London. I can't remember when. His wife then was still alive.

José. The poor man was left a widower a year ago last February. He has two charming children.

Marquis. I recently renewed my acquaintance with Maximo, and although for certain reasons I do not frequent the house, we are great friends, very good friends, indeed.

José. I, too, am attached to him. He is so good.

Marquis. Now, tell me, don't your master and mistress regret having brought this little rogue into their home?

José. [*Afraid that someone is coming.*] I'll tell your lordship. I have noticed. . . . [*He sees* DON URBANO *coming through the garden.*] The Master is coming.

Marquis. Withdraw. . . .

[*Enter* DON URBANO.]

Marquis. [*Embracing him.*] My dear Urbano.

Don Urbano. Marquis! So glad to see you. . . .

Marquis. And Evarista?

Don Urbano. She is well, and trying to account for the absence of the illustrious Marquis de Ronda.

Marquis. Oh, you don't know what a winter we've had!

Don Urbano. And Virginia?

Marquis. She is not ill, although, poor woman, she is always wrestling with her ailments. Nothing but her stubborn and vigorous spirit keeps her alive.

Don Urbano. Indeed? Really? [*Pointing toward the garden.*] Shall we go down into the garden?

Marquis. Presently. I'll rest a moment here. [*He seats himself.*] Now, tell me, dear Urbano, all about this charming girl, this Electra, whom you have taken out of school.

Don Urbano. She was not in school. She was living in Hendaye with relatives of her mother. I was never in favor of bringing her to live with us; but some time ago Evarista took a fancy to the idea. Her plan is to study the child's character, and see if we can make a good woman of her, or whether God reserves for us the disappointment of finding that she has inherited her mother's evil ways. You know, she was my wife's first cousin, and I need not remind you of Eleuteria's scandalous life in the early eighties.

Marquis. Yes, yes.

Don Urbano. The family, deeply hurt and ashamed, broke off all relations with her. This girl, whose father is unknown, lived with her mother till her fifth year. Then she was taken to the Ursulines of Bayonne. There, either to shorten, or to improve the name, they called her "Electra," which was an entirely new departure.

Marquis. Pardon me, hardly a new departure. The intimates of the unfortunate mother, Eleuteria Díaz, called her also "Electra" for the same reason that they called the father, who was a very valiant soldier, although most unhappy in his married life,—Agamemnon.

Don Urbano. I didn't know. . . . I never had anything to do with those people. I felt a repugnance for Eleuteria from the mere reports of her behavior.

Marquis. For Heaven's sake, my dear Urbano, don't be too harsh. Remember that Eleuteria, whom we shall call "Electra the First," changed her course. That must have been about the year '88.

Don Urbano. Yes, thereabouts. . . . Her repentance gave occasion for much talk. She died in '95, in San José de la Penitencia, regenerate, filled with a religious horror at her past.

Marquis. [*As if reproaching him for his severity.*] God forgave her. . . .

Don Urbano. Yes, yes. . . . Pardon, oblivion. . . .

Marquis. And now you are trying to take the measure of "Electra the Second?" To see whether she will grow up straight or crooked? And what conclusion have your experiments warranted?

Don Urbano. So far the results are doubtful and self-contradictory. There are moments when the child reveals to us high qualities, through her transparent innocence; at other times she seems the maddest creature God ever made. No sooner has she charmed you by her angelic frankness, than she frightens you by her impish sarcasms, that seem to derive from a total lack of conscience.

Marquis. Excess of imagination, perhaps lack of balance. Is she lively?

Don Urbano. Lively as electricity itself, mysterious, sudden, dangerous. She destroys, overthrows, illumines.

Marquis. [*Arising.*] I am burning with curiosity. Let us go and see her.

Cuesta. [*Enters showing signs of fatigue, pulls out his wallet and turns toward the table.*] Ah, Marquis. . . . May I speak to you here?

Marquis. All Hail, great Cuesta. What has our indefatigable agent to say?

Cuesta. [*Seating himself, evidently suffering from heart trouble.*] Indefatigable. . . . Oh! The agent is weary enough by this time.

Don Urbano. Well, sir, what can you tell me of the rise yesterday in debentures?

Cuesta. The news came from Paris of a rise. Two points.

Don Urbano. Have you effected our settlement?

Marquis. And mine?

Cuesta. They have my attention. . . . [*He takes papers out of his wallet and writes with a pencil.*] You will shortly have the exact figures. I made the best terms possible.

Marquis. To be sure. Since the par value of the new issue is 79.50 and we got ours at a very low price. . . .

Don Urbano. To be sure. . . .

Cuesta. To be sure . . . the result is very satisfactory.

Marquis. The ease with which we acquire wealth, dear Urbano, kindles in us love of

life and enthusiasm for human beauty. Let us go into the garden.

Don Urbano. [*To* CUESTA.] Are you coming?

Cuesta. I need ten minutes quiet to put my notes in order.

Don Urbano. Then we will leave you alone. Is there anything you wish?

Cuesta. [*His mind intent on his notes.*] No. . . . Yes; a glass of water. I'm all on fire.

Don Urbano. Immediately. [*He goes out with the* MARQUIS *towards the garden.*]

Cuesta. [*Running over his notes.*] Ah! yes, here's a mistake. The García Yustes get a million, six hundred thousand pesetas. Marquis de Ronda gets two hundred and twenty-two thousand. Twelve thousand and odd discounted, the item of nine thousand francs. . . . [*Patros enters with glasses of water, lumps of sugar, cognac. She waits a moment for* CUESTA *to finish his calculations.*]

Patros. Shall I leave it here, Don Leonardo?

Cuesta. Leave it and wait a moment. . . . A million, eight hundred . . . plus six hundred and ten . . . make . . . Now it's clear! And so, Patros. . . . [*He puts his hand in his pocket, draws out money which he gives her.*]

Patros. Many thanks, sir.

Cuesta. I am hoping that you will do me a favor.

Patros. At your service, Don Leonardo.

Cuesta. Well. . . . [*Toying with a lump of sugar.*] You see. . . .

Patros. Will you take a little cognac? You are so heated—that pure water may hurt you.

Cuesta. Just a little. Well, I should like . . . please don't misunderstand my motives. . . . I should like a private interview with Señorita Electra, just a few words. Knowing me as you do, you will understand that my motives are entirely honorable. . . . [*He collects his papers.*] Before anyone comes, can you tell me what time, what place will be most convenient?

Patros. A few words with the Señorita? [*Reflecting.*] That will have to be when my master and mistress are engaged with their lawyer. I shall be on the watch.

Cuesta. Better to-day if possible.

Patros. Will you return in a little while?

Cuesta. Yes, and you will advise me, secretly?

Patros. Yes, of course, yes. Don't be anxious. [*She takes the tray and goes out.*]

[PANTOJA, *dressed entirely in black, enters on the stage lost in thought.*]

Cuesta. My dear Pantoja, God bless you. How are you?

Pantoja. [*Sighing.*] Alive, and therefore in hopes. . . .

Cuesta. Hopes of a better life?

Pantoja. Enduring whatever the Lord ordains in this world to make us worthy of the next.

Cuesta. And your health?

Pantoja. Both well and ill. Ill, because pains and aches pursue me; well, since misery is a kind of pleasure. I get my satisfaction in endurance. [*Uneasy, and as if obsessed by a fixed idea, he looks toward the garden.*]

Cuesta. You are an ascetic.

Pantoja. What a little madcap! Look at her running about with the porter's children, and Maximo's and those of the neighbours! When she is allowed to indulge in childish pranks, Electra is in her glory.

Cuesta. Delightful child! May it please God to make a noble woman of her.

Pantoja. That gracious child, that fickle, tricksy girl will more easily turn into an angel than into a woman.

Cuesta. I don't catch your meaning, my dear Pantoja.

Pantoja. Well, I at least do! Look, look how they play. [*Alarmed.*] Great Heavens! Whom do I see there? The Marquis de Ronda?

Cuesta. It is he.

Pantoja. The corrupt corrupter. A Don Juan of the last generation, who can't make up his mind to retire lest he do a displeasure to the Devil!

Cuesta. So the old proverb is still true: No Paradise without its serpent!

Pantoja. Oh, no! We had a serpent before he came! [*Nervous and fretful, he walks about the stage.*]

Cuesta. Have you heard of the million odd I have for you, to change the subject?

Pantoja. [*Taking little interest in the matter, his mind intent on something else which he does not disclose.*] Yes, yes, I know . . . yes . . . We have made an enormous profit.

Cuesta. Evarista will carry through her great pious foundations. . . .

Pantoja. [*Mechanically.*] Of course.

Cuesta. And you will dedicate still greater

sums to the convent of San José de la Penitencia.

Pantoja. Of course. We had a serpent before he came. What were you saying, my dear Cuesta?

Cuesta. That you will dedicate sums. . . .

Pantoja. I beg your pardon. . . . Is it true that our neighbor across the way, our wonderful sage, our inventor, who almost works miracles, expects to move away?

Cuesta. Who? Maximo? I think so. In Bilbao and Barcelona they receive, it seems, with enthusiasm his wonderful experiments in new applications of electricity; and they offer him all the capital he needs to establish his new enterprises on a firm foundation.

Pantoja. [*Meditating.*] Oh! I should furnish him capital within my means, provided, of course. . . .

[*The* MARQUIS, DON URBANO, EVARISTA, *come from the garden.*]

Evarista. [*Leaving the arm of the* MARQUIS.] Congratulations, Cuesta. Pantoja, I am delighted to see you to-day! [CUESTA *and* PANTOJA *bow and kiss her hand respectfully. The lady seats herself at the right; the* MARQUIS *standing at her side. The other three form a group at the left, talking business.*]

Marquis. [*Renewing with* EVARISTA *an interrupted conversation.*] In this way you will go down, not only in History, but in the Lives of the Saints.

Evarista. No praise, Marquis, for what is absolutely devoid of merit. We have no children; God pours out upon us ever greater wealth. Year by year we fall heir to new inheritances. Without putting ourselves to any trouble to scheme and devise, our surplus income, ably invested by our good Cuesta, brings us unexpected new capital. We buy an estate and within a year its value trebles; we acquire a barren tract of land, and it contains inexhaustible deposits of coal, iron, lead. What can this mean, Marquis?

Marquis. Mean? Why, my noble friend, when God bestows such great riches on one who neither desires nor values wealth, it clearly means that he would have them set apart for his service.

Evarista. Exactly. And because I understand Providence to mean that, I comply promptly with the divine will. What Cuesta brings me to-day no more than passes through my hands. I dedicate to the Sisterhood seven million pesetas; and I shall see to it that the college in Madrid is as magnificently appointed and equipped as befits so great an institution. We shall encourage the work of the colleges at Valencia and Cadiz.

Pantoja. [*Joining the group at the right.*] Without forgetting, my friend, the University —the abode of higher education, which must become a sanctuary to true science!

Evarista. Don Pantoja well knows that I do continually bear it in mind.

Don Urbano. [*Passing also to the right.*] We think of it day and night.

Marquis. Admirable, admirable. [*He rises.*]

Evarista. [*To* CUESTA, *who also passes to the right.*] And now, Leonardo, what shall we do?

Cuesta. [*Seating himself at the lady's side, he proposes new schemes.*] To-day we'll confine ourselves to investing a certain sum in common stock.

Pantoja. [*Standing to the left of* EVARISTA.] Or in preferred.

Marquis. [*Walking about the stage with* DON URBANO.] You will permit me, dear Urbano, while warmly extolling the merits of your wife, not to overlook my own. I speak for my wife and myself. Virginia has given the Sisters of Las Esclavas one good third of our fortune.

Don Urbano. Which by the way is one of the greatest in all Andalusia.

Marquis. Besides, we leave everything to it in our will, save the small part assigned to meet certain obligations, and poor relations. . . .

Don Urbano. Excellent. But, according to reports, some years ago you did not favor Virginia's indulgence in such expensive piety.

Marquis. True. Yet in the end she persuaded me. I am hers, in body and soul. She has converted me; she has regenerated me.

Don Urbano. As my Evarista has converted and regenerated me.

Marquis. To keep peace in the family, I began by temporizing, then I yielded. Now temporizing and now yielding, I have arrived . . . well, where I am. It doesn't worry or vex me, oh, no. I live now in a kind of peaceful beatitude, cured of my old habits. I have really become convinced at last that Virginia will not only save her own soul, but mine too.

Don Urbano. Exactly my case. Evarista will save me.

Marquis. One thing is certain, no initiative is left us in any matter.

Don Urbano. In no matter, dear Marquis.

Marquis. So that at times we are not allowed even to breathe of our own accord.

Don Urbano. Not allowed even to breathe of our own accord.

Marquis. But we live in peace; no strain, no friction!

Don Urbano. We serve God without wear or tear.

Marquis. Our blessed wives precede us on the road to a glorious eternity and never worry that they will leave us behind them.

Don Urbano. That they would never do!

Evarista. Urbano?

Don Urbano. [*Answering promptly.*] Your pleasure?

Evarista. Authorize Cuesta to make the settlement and delivery to the Fathers.

Don Urbano. Immediately. [CUESTA *rises.*]

Evarista. Another matter. Go down at once and tell Electra she has had now three hours of play.

Pantoja. [*Imperiously.*] Bid her come up. Far too much play already.

Don Urbano. I am going. [*He sees* ELECTRA *coming.*] Here she is now.

[*Enter* ELECTRA; *behind her,* MAXIMO.]

Electra. [*Enters running and laughing pursued by* MAXIMO, *but well ahead of him in the race. Her laughter betrays childish fear.*] Don't let him catch me. . . . I am angry with you, you horrid wretch!

Maximo. [*Carrying in one hand various articles, and in the other a long poplar branch which he flourishes as a whip.*] Rogue! If I catch you!

Electra. [*Paying no attention to those on the stage, flies across it and takes refuge with* DOÑA EVARISTA, *kneeling at her feet and throwing her arms about her waist.*] I am safe. Auntie, do tell him to go away.

Maximo. Where is that wild girl? [*With a playful threat.*] Ah! She knows where to fly for safety!

Evarista. My child, when will you show some dignity? Maximo, you are as much of a romp as she is.

Maximo. [*Showing what he has in his hand.*] See what she has done? Broken these two test-tubes! And then, look at these papers on which I had made a calculation costing an enormous amount of labor! [*He shows the paper, holding it high.*] This one she made into a paper bird; this other one she gave to the children to paint donkeys and elephants on, and a warship firing at a fortress!

Pantoja. Indeed? She meddles with the laboratory?

Maximo. Yes, and what's more destroys the discipline of my children. She has upset everything.

Pantoja. [*Severely.*] My dear young lady. . . .

Evarista. Electra!

Marquis. Blessed childhood! [*Enraptured.*] Electra, my delightful tomboy, blessed be your pranks! Keep, as long as ever you can, your precious joy in life.

Electra. I didn't break the test-tubes. It was Pepito. I did take away those papers covered with scrawls, supposing they were of no use.

Cuesta. Come, come, peace!

Maximo. Peace? [*To* ELECTRA.] Very well, so be it. I pardon you and grant you your life this once. For olive branch, take this. [*He gives her the stick.* ELECTRA *takes it and hits him lightly.*]

Electra. And you take this for what you said to me. [*Hitting him more sharply.*] And this for what you didn't say!

Maximo. But I had nothing left to say!

Pantoja. Do be serious, be sensible!

Evarista. What did he say to you?

Maximo. Truths which ought to be very serviceable to her: that she must learn for herself much that she doesn't now know; open her eyes wide and study human life, and see that it's not all joy, that there are also such things as duties, sorrows, sacrifices. . . .

Electra. Heavens, how frightful! [*All surround her in the center of the stage, except* PANTOJA, *who hurries to the side of* EVARISTA.]

Cuesta. Her escapades ought not to be encouraged by applause.

Don Urbano. And you should nerve yourself to some severity.

Maximo. Nobody can outdo me in severity. Isn't it true, child, that I am very severe and that you thank me for it? Confess that you thank me for it.

Electra. [*Whipping him lightly.*] Most sage accuser! If this were a real whip, I'd strike you with greater satisfaction!

Marquis. [*Smiling and amused.*] Adorable! Strike me too, Electra.

Electra. [*Striking him very gently.*] You? Oh, I have no confidence in you. . . . Just a

little tap, but no more . . . so . . . [*Striking the rest.*] and you . . . and you . . . just a little more . . .!

Evarista. Why don't you play the piano? These gentlemen have come to hear you.

Maximo. When she doesn't practice a note! Her want of application to the arts is as great as her taste and fancy for them.

Cuesta. Let us see, then, her water-colors and her sketches. You'll see something, Marquis! [*All gather around the table, except* EVARISTA *and* PANTOJA, *who talk apart.*]

Electra. Oh, yes, one thing. . . . [*Hunting for her portfolio of drawings among the books and magazines on the table.*] that I am a great artist!

Maximo. Sing your own praises, little chatterbox.

Electra. [*Untying the strings of the portfolio.*] You crying out my faults, and I singing my own praise. We shall see who is best at his part . . . Behold! [*Displaying her drawings.*] Admire! What have you to say to these magnificent sketches? What landscapes! Animals, you see, that look like people; people that look like animals! [*All are astonished at the drawings, which pass from hand to hand.*]

Evarista. [*Who, turning her attention from the group in the center, converses confidentially with* PANTOJA.] You are right, Don Salvador. You always are. And now in the case of Electra, your judgment is like a star of light, so brilliant, that we all suffer eclipse.

Pantoja. It is not intelligence in me, as you think. It is only the splendor of a fierce fire burning within me: my Will. Thanks to its strength, which I owe to God, I have managed to amend my own ways.

Evarista. After the confidences entrusted to me last night, I clearly see your right to interfere in the education of this foolish girl.

Pantoja. To mark out her paths for her, to point out higher goals.

Evarista. A right which implies unavoidable obligations. . . .

Pantoja. Oh, what a joy to feel that you admit this, my dear friend! I feared lest my last night's confidences—the dismal story blackening the best years of my life—might make me forfeit your esteem.

Evarista. No, my friend. As a man, you have been subject to human weaknesses. But the sinner, now regenerate, has chastened his life with mortifications, the fruits of repentance; and has wholly rectified it by the stern practice of virtue.

Pantoja. Sorrow, love of solitude, contempt of vanities—these were my salvation. Well and good; but I should not have made full satisfaction for my sin, were I to neglect the duty of directing this dear child, of removing every danger from her path. If we are careless, she might easily follow in the footsteps of her mother.

Evarista. In my opinion, you should have a talk with her.

Pantoja. Yes, alone.

Evarista. I meant alone. Give her to understand, with due delicacy, what right you have to exercise authority over her.

Pantoja. Yes, yes, my most cherished desire! [*They continue talking in whispers.*]

Electra. [*In the center of the group, in mock quarrel with* MAXIMO.] Stop, stop. What do you know about it? [*Displaying a drawing.*] This miscreant avers that my bird looks like a thoughtful old man, and that the woman resembles a sick lobster!

Marquis. Why no! . . . It is very good.

Maximo. When she takes the least pains, she shows the most talent!

Cuesta. Indeed, this little landscape with the sea in the distance, and these tree trunks. . . .

Electra. My specialty! Do you know what it is? Old tree trunks, walls in ruins! I draw well what I know nothing about: sorrow, the past, death. The joyful present, and youth, I cannot render so well. [*With pain and fear.*] I am a great artist, you see, in whatever is utterly unlike me—alien to my life.

Don Urbano. What grace!

Cuesta. Delightful!

Marquis. How she sparkles! Enchanting! Merely to hear her. . . .

Maximo. In time we shall have serious thought, sense of responsibility.

Electra. [*Taking off* MAXIMO.] Serious thought! Responsibility! Note, pray, the sage with his solemn countenance. I'll exhibit all that when I please . . . and more than you perhaps. . . .

Maximo. We shall see; we shall see.

Pantoja. [*Who has listened to what those in the center are saying.*] I cannot help remarking that the girl's easy familiarity with Don Urbano's nephew offends me.

Evarista We shall see to that. But re-

member, Maximo is most honorable and judicious.

Pantoja. Yes, yes, my dear friend, but in the ways of self will the strongest slip and fall. Sad experience has taught me.

Electra. [*In the center of the stage.*] I'll be serious when it suits me. No one becomes serious until God bids him. Nobody cries out until he is hurt.

Marquis. True, true.

Cuesta. And soon enough, you will learn to be practical.

Electra. Ay, whenever God comes to me and says: "My child, here are troubles for you, duties, difficulties, responsibilities. . . ."

Maximo. Which He will say, and right soon.

Evarista. Electra, my daughter, don't be foolish.

Electra. Auntie, it's Maximo who's foolish. [*Goes to the side of her aunt.*]

Don Urbano. Maximo is right.

Cuesta. Assuredly. [CUESTA *and* DON URBANO *pass to the right of* EVARISTA; MAXIMO *and the* MARQUIS *alone remain at the left of the stage.*]

Maximo. May I have the benefit now, my dear Marquis, of your first impression?

Marquis. The dear girl has charmed me. Now I see you didn't exaggerate.

Maximo. And your keen eye discovers nothing beneath these frolicsome fancies?

Marquis. Yes, yes, moral beauty, common sense. . . . But it is not the time yet for such discoveries. I will continue my investigations.

Maximo. Because, to tell you the truth, consecrated, devoted as I am to science, from my earliest years, I know little of the world. Human character is a sealed book to me.

Marquis. In that book, at least, I read as I run.

Maximo. Will you come to my house?

Marquis. In a moment. My wife might scold if she hears that I visit the workshop of electricity and the factory of light! But Virginia won't be very harsh. I will risk it. Then I will return here later, and on the pretext of admiring the girl's talent at the piano, I'll talk with her, and resume my studies of her character.

Maximo. [*Aloud.*] Are you coming, Marquis?

Don Urbano. Will you leave us?

Marquis. I am going a little while with this friend of ours.

Evarista. Marquis, I am much vexed at your long absence; so vexed, indeed, that you cannot make amends unless you lunch with us. It is a punishment, Don Juan; it is your penance.

Marquis. I accept the invitation in atonement for my fault, blessing the hand that chastises.

Evarista. You, Maximo, will come also?

Maximo. If I am at leisure then I will come.

Electra. Don't come. For goodness' sake, don't come. [*With joy she can hardly conceal.*] Are you coming? Say:—yes! [*Correcting herself.*] No, no; say:—no!

Maximo. Ah! you shall not get rid of me so easily. Some day you will grow up, little rogue, and have sense.

Electra. And you'll lose yours, you foolish wise old man! [*She follows him with her eyes until he leaves the room.* MAXIMO *and the* MARQUIS *leave through the garden.* JOSÉ *enters from the rear.*]

José. [*Announcing visitors.*] The Sister Superior of the convent of San José de la Penitencia.

Pantoja. Oh, my good Sister Barbara de la Cruz!

Evarista. Show her in. [*She rises.*] No; to the drawing-room. Come.

Pantoja. What a happy chance! Now I shall not need to go to the convent.

Evarista. Daughter, go and practice. [*Pointing to the next room.*]

Cuesta. [*Taking his leave.*] I take my leave, for the present, to return shortly.

Evarista. Good-bye.

Cuesta. [*Aside, near* ELECTRA.] Will they leave you alone?

Pantoja. [*Hastening to* ELECTRA.] Electra, cultivate intelligently the sublime art of music. Dedicate all your talents to the great Bach, that you may catch the religious spirit of his style. [*All go out except* ELECTRA.]

Electra. [*Humming a sacred chant, collects her drawings and puts them in order.*] Bach! . . . so that I may catch his precious spirit! [*Sings.*]

Cuesta. [*Enters furtively from the rear.*] Alone!

Electra. [*Sings a few bars of church music, then sees* CUESTA.] Why? I thought you had gone away, Don Leonardo?

Cuesta. [*With hesitation.*] Yes, but I am back again, my child. I have something to tell you.

Electra. [*A little frightened.*] To tell me?

Cuesta. The matter is delicate, very delicate. . . . [*With signs of fatigue and some difficulty in breathing.*] Pardon me. . . . My heart! I can't stand. [ELECTRA *draws up a chair. He seats himself.*] Yes, so delicate is the matter, that I don't know how to begin.

Electra. Oh goodness! What can it be?

Cuesta. [*Taking courage.*] Electra, I knew your mother.

Electra. Oh! my mother was very unfortunate.

Cuesta. What do you understand by—unfortunate?

Electra. Well . . . that she lived among bad people, who wouldn't let her be as good as she wanted to be.

Cuesta. Ah! You have given utterance unawares to a great truth. . . . Do you remember your mother? Do you ever think of her?

Electra. To me my mother is a vague, yet tender memory; an image that never forsakes me. I keep it alive in my heart, although it is no more now than a precious memory on which my eyes in their longing to see her, are forever dwelling. Poor, poor mother! [*She lifts her handkerchief to her eyes.* CUESTA *sighs.*] Tell me, Don Leonardo, when you knew my mother, was I very little?

Cuesta. You were a darling little rogue. We used to tickle you, to watch you laugh; your laughter was to me the charm, the very joy of nature.

Electra. You see why I have turned out so thoughtless, so wild, so mischievous! And sometimes you used to catch me in your arms.

Cuesta. Many and many a time!

Electra. [*Smiling through her tears.*] Didn't I pull your moustache?

Cuesta. So hard sometimes that you hurt me.

Electra. You used to tap me on the hands.

Cuesta. Come! Come!

Electra. Do you know? I think they still hurt.

Cuesta. [*Eager to reach his subject.*] Come, let us get to the point. I warn you, Electra, what I say is in strict confidence. It's between us two.

Electra. Oh! You almost scare me, Don Leonardo.

Cuesta. I do not mean to frighten you. You see in me a friend, your best friend; and behind what I am now doing, the best motives of disinterested sentiment.

Electra. [*Confused.*] Yes, yes; I do not doubt . . . still . . .

Cuesta. Do you know why I take this step? Although I am not very old, I feel that I am not long for this world. I have been a widower these twenty years. I have no family except my daughter Pillar, who has now married and left me. I am alone in this world, with one foot in the stirrup, ready to start for the next. And this loneliness! . . . Ah! it seems as if it would drive me off the sooner. [*Speaking with much hesitation.*] But before leaving . . . [*Pause.*] Electra, I had thought much about you before they brought you to Madrid, and since I have seen you, my God! I have thought and felt . . . what can I say?—a sweet affection, the purest affection, while I have been tortured by the prickings of my conscience.

Electra. [*Astounded.*] Conscience! What a serious thing that must be. Mine is like that of a child still in the cradle.

Cuesta. [*Sadly.*] Mine is old, wrinkled with memories. It recalls and keeps ever before my eyes the grave errors of my life.

Electra. You? . . . grave errors? . . . you, who are so good!

Cuesta. Yes, yes; good, good . . . and a sinner. At any rate, let us stop considering the errors and attend to their consequences. I don't want you to live in poverty, to be without friends. It's doubtful whether the protection of Urbano and Evarista will continue. How can I allow you to find yourself perhaps to-morrow poor and destitute?

Electra. [*With a painful struggle between her knowledge and her innocence.*] I don't know whether I understand. . . . I don't know whether I ought to understand.

Cuesta. The most delicate thing for you to do is to understand, without telling me so; and to accept my protection without thanking me for it. My duty and your right go hand in hand. Thanks to me, Electra, the bonds which unite us with those that are alive and with those also that are—dead, will not be severed. And if I insist on bringing up this question, it's because . . . because some time ago the fear of sudden death obsessed me. My father and my brother died as if struck by lightning. I have here [*Pointing to*

his heart.] the cardiac lesion, which carried them away. It is a watch that sadly ticks off the hours, the days of my life. And I cannot postpone this. Death must not overtake me leaving your precious life unprotected. I cannot, I must not hope. In conclusion, daughter, let me inform you that I have assured you a modest competency.

Electra. A modest competency!

Cuesta. Enough to live with easy independence.

Electra. [*Confused.*] And I. . . . How have I deserved this? I beg your pardon, but I can't bring myself to believe . . . that . . .

Cuesta. It will come . . . to seem quite natural.

Electra. But why don't you speak of this matter to my aunt and uncle?

Cuesta. [*Preoccupied.*] Because . . . Oh, at the proper time I'll tell them. Meanwhile, you alone ought to know of my intentions.

Electra. But . . .

Cuesta. [*Rising with emotion.*] And now, Electra, will you love this poor sick man whose days are numbered?

Electra. Oh! It is so easy for me to love! But you must not talk of dying, Don Leonardo.

Cuesta. It comforts me to know that I will make you weep.

Electra. Oh, don't make me ever weep after this.

Cuesta. [*Hastening his departure to control his emotion.*] Good-bye, my daughter.

Electra. Good-bye. [*Detaining him.*] And by what name should I call you.

Cuesta. Friend only, no more. Good-bye. [*Tearing himself away, goes out at the back.* ELECTRA *follows him with her eyes until he disappears.*]

Electra. [*In thought.*] Good Heaven! What must I think? His broken phrases are more eloquent . . . betray more . . . Mother of my soul! [*The* MARQUIS, *who enters through the garden, advances slowly.*] Oh, Marquis!

Marquis. Are you frightened?

Electra. Not at all! I am surprised, no more. If you come to hear me play, you have wasted your time. To-day I won't practice.

Marquis. I'm glad of it. So that we can talk . . . although barely acquainted with you, I am filled with admiration for your talents and charm; and having seen one side of your character, I long to see the others also. You'll wonder, perhaps, at this curiosity of mine and will think it impertinent.

Electra. Oh! no. I am inquisitive myself, dear Marquis, and I take the liberty of asking: are you a friend of Maximo's?

Marquis. I like him, and greatly admire him . . . strange isn't it?

Electra. It seems very natural to me.

Marquis. You are so young, and perhaps you cannot take into account the causes of my friendship with the "Marvellous Magician." I wonder if you understand me.

Electra. Make it all clear to me.

Marquis. The society I frequent, my own family circle, the habits of my household effect me like—physical suffocation. Without giving myself any clear account of it, by more instinct of self-preservation I rush out sometimes for fresh air. My thoughts turn towards science, nature . . . and that's what I find in Maximo.

Electra. Yes, yes, fresh air? life? . . . and . . . Well, do you know, Marquis, I believe I am getting to understand your case?

Marquis. [*Aside.*] The girl is no dullard. [*Aloud.*] Moreover, you must know that I am deeply interested in this man.

Electra. You are fond of him? You admire him for his great qualities?

Marquis. And I pity him for his misfortune.

Electra. [*Surprised.*] Maximo unfortunate?

Marquis. What greater unhappiness than the solitude in which he lives? Since left a widower, he has buried himself in abstruse research—and I begin to fear for his health.

Electra. His children comfort him; they keep him company. You saw them to-day. What lovely little beings they are! The eldest, who is just five years old, is a marvel of intelligence. The youngest, two years old, seems to me the daintiest little creature in the world. I adore them; I sleep with them, and how I would like to be their nurse!

Marquis. Poor Maximo, absorbed in his studies, he cannot attend to them as he ought.

Electra. Certainly not; that is what I keep saying.

Marquis. It is perfectly clear: Maximo needs a wife. But . . . here come in my difficulties and my doubts. In spite of all my search and observations I simply cannot find the woman worthy to share her life with this great man

Electra. You can't find her because there is none; there certainly is none. Why, for Maximo, you should have to find a wife of very great judgment.

Marquis. That is it: great judgment.

Electra. Just the opposite of me, who have none at all.

Marquis. I shouldn't say that.

Electra. At all events, when you hear me say foolish things to him, and call him "wretch," "old man," "wise fool," don't think that I am in earnest. It is all for fun, Marquis.

Marquis. Oh, of course. I understood you perfectly.

Electra. Impertinent jests perhaps, because Maximo is very solemn . . . and . . . Do you think, my dear sir, that I ought really be so serious?

Marquis. Oh, no! Everyone is as God made him. There is no need of putting any restraint on yourself, my dear Señorita. We don't have to be solemn to be good.

Electra. You may be surprised, Marquis, but I who am so ignorant have hit upon the same idea.

[PANTOJA *appears in the rear.*]

Pantoja. [*Aside, in the doorway.*] This incorrigible libertine . . . this veteran in vice dares to fasten his poisonous looks upon this flower. [*Advances slowly.*]

Marquis. [*Aside.*] Ah! here he comes to thrust his dense personality between us, and we cannot continue our talk.

Electra. The Marquis has come to hear me play; but I am very lazy. We're putting it off to another day.

Marquis. You know that the great Beethoven is my delight. I have heard how well Electra interprets him, and I hoped to hear the "Sonata Pathétique," the "Clair de Lune" . . . but we have diverted ourselves instead with mere talk and now there is no time.

Pantoja. [*Bitterly.*] Yes, the time for practice is past.

Marquis. [*Recovering his manners.*] Another day will do. My friend, Virginia and I would be greatly pleased if you honored us with your advice in regard to the convent de Las Esclavas.

Pantoja. Yes, yes. This afternoon I'll pay my respects to Virginia and we shall talk about it.

Marquis. You'll find her in the convent. She will be there all the afternoon. And as I am in the way here . . . [*Taking his leave.*]

Electra. No, my dear Marquis, you are not at all in the way.

Marquis. I am going with the music . . . to Maximo's laboratory.

Pantoja. Yes, yes; you'll find much to interest you there.

Marquis. Au revoir, my pious friend!

Pantoja. God bless you.

[*The* MARQUIS *goes out through the garden.*]

Pantoja. [*Sharply.*] What was he saying? What did that corrupter of innocence tell you?

Electra. Nothing; stories, laughable anecdotes.

Pantoja. Oh, stories! Be on your guard against amusing anecdotes and pleasant story tellers, who hide a poisonous sting among jessamines. I observe that you're nervous, anxious, as if you had heard a snake rustle through the bushes.

Electra. Oh, no.

Pantoja. The unrest that undesirable conversations produce can be soothed by my beneficent and wholesome meditations.

Electra. You're a poet, Señor Pantoja, and I like to hear you.

Pantoja. [*Beckons her to a chair; the two seat themselves.*] My child, I am going to give you an explanation of the intense affection which you must have noticed in me. Have you observed it?

Electra. Yes, Señor.

Pantoja. To explain it I must tell you a secret.

Electra. [*Much alarmed.*] Oh! goodness, you make me tremble!

Pantoja. Be calm, my child. First hear what is most painful for me to confess. Electra, I have been very wicked.

Electra. Why, on the contrary, one would think you a saint!

Pantoja. I was wicked, I say on one occasion in my life. [*Sighing deeply.*] Many years ago.

Electra. [*Sharply.*] How many? Can I remember the time when you were bad, Don Salvador?

Pantoja. No. When I degraded myself, when I wallowed in the mire of sin, you were not yet born.

Electra. Yet I was born? . . .

Pantoja. [*After a pause.*] Of course. . . .

Electra. I was born . . . for Heaven's

sake, Señor Pantoja, do not keep me in suspense.

Pantoja. Your distress proves that we should turn our eyes away from the past. The present ought to prove highly satisfactory for you.

Electra. And why, pray?

Pantoja. Because in me you have a refuge, a lifelong protection! It is my unspeakable happiness to care for a being so noble and beautiful; to defend you from all harm, to guard you, to preserve you, to direct you, so that you may evermore be preserved pure and unspotted; that neither the shadow nor the breath of evil may touch you. You are a child who seems an angel. But I am not content to have you only seem an angel. I want you to be an angel!

Electra. [*Coldly.*] An angel, one that should belong to you in particular! . . . And in this I ought to see an act of extraordinary and admirable charity!

Pantoja. Not charity; it is duty. My duty of protecting you meets your right to protection.

Electra. This self-confidence of yours, this authority of yours . . .

Pantoja. Spring from my intense affection, as physical force derives from heat. And my offer of protection is prompted by my conscience.

Electra. [*Rises with great agitation. Leaving* Pantoja, *she exclaims aside.*] Two, Oh Lord, two protectors! And this one wants to oppress me. What dreadful confusion! [*Aloud.*] Señor Pantoja, I respect you, I admire your virtues. But your right to exercise authority over me, I do not understand. Pardon my boldness. Obedience and submission I owe to nobody but my aunt.

Pantoja. Which amounts to the same thing. Evarista does me the honour to consult me in all her affairs. In obeying her, you obey me.

Electra. And does my aunt too wish that I should be her angel, and yours also?

Pantoja. Everybody's angel and God's in particular. You may rest assured, you have fallen into good hands, and you should allow yourself, my daughter, to be reared up in virtue, in purity.

Electra. [*Betraying impatience.*] Very good, sir, let them make me pure! Yet in what way am I wicked?

Pantoja. You might become wicked. And in matters of disease, prevention is better than cure.

Electra. Ah, me! [*Raising her eyes as if in an ecstasy, she sighs deeply. A pause.*]

Pantoja. Why do you sigh so?

Electra. My heart must get relief. It is weighed down horribly by the consciences of others!

[Evarista *enters in the rear.*]

Evarista. Señor Pantoja, Mother Barbara de la Cruz is waiting your last injunctions to take her leave.

Pantoja. Ah! I had forgotten. I'll go at once. [*Aside to* Evarista.] We have spoken. Keep close watch on her. We must defeat the evil influences. [*Before* Pantoja's *exit by the rear, the* Marquis *and* Maximo *enter on the right.*]

Marquis. I'm a little late.

Evarista. Not too late. Were you all this while in Maximo's laboratory?

[*Two groups on the stage;* Electra *and* Maximo *at the left;* Evarista *and the* Marquis *at the right.*]

Marquis. Yes, Señora, this man is a wonder. [*He continues to talk of what he has seen in the laboratory.*]

Electra. [*Sighing.*] Yes, Maximo, I must consult you in a serious matter.

Maximo. [*With keen interest.*] Tell me at once.

Electra. [*Looking with suspicion at the other group.*] Not now, not now.

Maximo. When?

Electra. I don't know. . . . I don't know when I can tell you. . . . It isn't a thing to be told in a few words.

Maximo. Oh, my poor child! As I told you, are the serious things of life, the sorrows and duties, now making their appearance?

Electra. Maybe.

Maximo. [*Looking at her earnestly with marked attention.*] I see on your face a cloud of sadness, of fear . . . an unusual thing for you.

Electra. They want to circumvent me, to enslave me, to reduce me to an angelical quintessence . . . I don't understand it all.

Maximo. [*With great earnestness.*] Don't consent to it. For Heaven's sake, Electra, defend yourself!

Electra. What course do you suggest?

Maximo. [*Positively.*] Independence!

Electra. Independence?

Maximo. Emancipation! . . . more plainly, insubordination.

Electra. You mean to say: do whatever I feel like doing? Play as much as I please? Go into your house as into a conquered country, romp with your children and run off to the garden or wherever my fancy takes me?

Maximo. All that, and more.

Electra. But think what you are saying!

Maximo. I know what I am saying.

Electra. But you have advised the opposite before . . .!

Maximo. [*Gazing earnestly at her.*] In your face, in your eyes, I can see that your life has undergone a radical change. You are afraid, Electra.

Electra. Yes. [*Timidly.*]

Maximo. You . . . [*Hesitating for the right word, he is about to say "love" but does not dare*] have conceived a passionate desire for something.

Electra. [*Effusively.*] Yes. [*Pauses.*] And you recommend that in spite of fear and opposition I rebel?

Maximo. Yes, let your impulses have free course. Let all there is in you get scope and show us what you really are.

Electra. What I am! Do you want to know that?

Maximo. Your soul . . .

Electra. My secret self . . .

Maximo. Your soul. . . . In that lies everything.

Electra. [*Noticing that* EVARISTA *is watching her.*] Hush, they are looking at us.

[*Enter* DON URBANO *and* PANTOJA *in the rear.*]

Don Urbano. Shall we go in to luncheon?

PANTOJA. [*To* EVARISTA, *choking with rage at seeing* ELECTRA *with* MAXIMO.] But, my daughter, are you going to leave *her* alone with Mephistopheles?

Evarista. There is no cause for alarm, friend Pantoja.

Marquis. [*Laughing.*] Of course, if this Mephistopheles is a saint. [*Offers his arm to* EVARISTA.]

Pantoja. [*Imperiously taking the hand of* ELECTRA, *placing it in his arm.*] Come with me! [ELECTRA *walking with* PANTOJA, *turns her head to look at* MAXIMO.]

Maximo. [*Looking at* ELECTRA *and* PANTOJA.] With you? . . . We shall see. [MAXIMO *and* DON URBANO *go out last.*]

ACT TWO

The same setting as in Act One

[EVARISTA *and* DON URBANO, *seated together at a table, transacting business;* BALBINA *serves her mistress a cup of broth.*]

Don Urbano. [*Preparing to write.*] What shall we say to the Father Superior of the Patrocinio College?

Evarista. Why, you know. That we approve the plans and estimates and that we shall proceed to make arrangements with the contractor.

Don Urbano. Don't forget that this scheme amounts to [*Reading a paper*] three hundred and twenty-two thousand pesetas. . . .

Evarista. Very well. We shall still have enough left to keep up the Helping Hand.* [*To* BALBINA, *who picks up the cup.*] Don't forget what I told you.

Balbina. I am watching, Señora. I don't think that there is any harm in Señorita Electra's mischief. If she receives letters and notes from so many suitors, it's to pass the time away, and to have matter for jests and laughter.

Evarista. But how do they reach the house?

Balbina. The letters of those fops? I don't know yet, but I am watching Patros, who seems to me . . .

Evarista. Be very discreet and acquaint me with what you discover.

Balbina. Never fear, Señora. [*Exit.*]

[MAXIMO *enters from the rear, in haste, with plans and papers.*]

Maximo. Am I interrupting you?

Evarista. Not at all, my son. Come in.

Maximo. Just a few minutes, aunt.

Don Urbano. Do you come from the Minister of Public Works?

Maximo. I come from a conference with the committee of Bilboa. To-day is a trying one for me! Overwork, a thousand business matters, and to crown all, the house in a turmoil.

Evarista. Why, what's wrong? Balbina told me yesterday you had dismissed your servants.

Maximo. They worked wretchedly, they were robbing me. I am alone with my secretary and the nurse.

*Ambulance station, of which there are several in Madrid: Casa de Socorro.

Evarista. Come here for your meals.

Maximo. Leave the children there? And if I bring them with me they would disturb you and upset the whole house.

Evarista. No, no; don't bring them with you. I adore the little creatures, but I don't want them about me. They toss everything in disorder and soil everything. I am driven crazy by their scurrying around, by their screams of laughter, and their quarrels. Besides, there's the fear that they will get scratched by the cats or get wet, or fall and get their heads cut.

Maximo. I would rather you would send us a cook. . . .

Evarista. Enriqueta will go. See to it, Urbano; don't forget.

Maximo. [*About to leave.*] Very well.

Evarista. Stop a minute. As it seems, your affairs are making progress. You know what I've told you already; if the "Marvellous Magician" needs more capital to exploit his inventions, he has only to say the word.

Maximo. Thanks, aunt. I command all the funds I need.

Don Urbano. A few years and the Magician will be richer than we.

Maximo. Quite possible.

Don Urbano. The fruit of your exceptional intelligence . . .

Maximo. [*Modestly.*] No; of my perseverance rather, of my patient industry. . . .

Evarista. Don't remind us of it. You work like a beast of burden.

Maximo. Oh, well, first, dear aunt, what my sense of duty demands; then a little extra just for fun, sheer recreation and scientific enthusiasm!

Don Urbano. Monomania, frenzy!

Evarista. [*In a sermonizing tone.*] Ah, no! It is ambition, cursed ambition, which leads so many astray, and ends in compassing their ruin.

Maximo. Very legitimate ambition, aunt. Consider that.

Evarista. [*Taking the words out of his mouth.*] The hunger and thirst for riches, to sate with riches the craving for pleasure. Pleasure, pleasure, pleasure; that's what you want; and for this you spend your life in ceaseless effort, sacrificing in the struggle health, digestion, brain and heart. You don't consider the shortness of life, nor the vanity of greed for temporal things; you are not quite persuaded yet that it must all remain behind you here.

Maximo. [*Graciously, impatient to be gone.*] It must all remain here indeed; unlike myself, who must be off immediately.

José. [*Announcing.*] The Marquis de Ronda.

Maximo. [*Delaying his departure.*] Ah! Well, I'll not go without paying him my compliments!

Evarista. [*Picking up papers.*] No more work to-day, let us hope.

Don Urbano. I can fancy what he comes for.

Evarista. Show him in, José, show him in.

[*Exit* José.]

Maximo. He comes to invite you to the dedication of the new convent De las Esclavas, founded by Virginia. He told me about it last night.

Evarista. Ah, yes! . . . Does it come off to-day?

[*Enter the* Marquis.]

Marquis. [*Bowing ceremoniously.*] My most honoured friend, Don Urbano. [*To* Maximo.] And how are you? I didn't expect to find the Magician here.

Maximo. The Magician salutes you, and takes his leave.

Marquis. A moment, my friend. [*Detaining him.*]

Evarista. Indeed, we shall certainly come, Marquis.

Marquis. You know already?

Don Urbano. And the time?

Marquis. Five o'clock sharp. [*To* Maximo.] I don't invite you; I know that you have no leisure for social life.

Maximo. Unfortunately you are right. To-day I cannot possibly go.

Marquis. Not even when we give an entertainment that combines the interests of religion and society? At all events, you can't get rid of me to-night!

Evarista. [*Taunting him playfully.*] We've noticed already—with satisfaction of course—what frequent visits the Marquis pays to the workshop of the great necromancer.

Maximo. The Marquis honours me with his friendship, and with the interest he takes in my studies.

Marquis. A mania has suddenly possessed me for engines and electrical phenomena. Whims of old age.

Don Urbano. [*To* MAXIMO.] See, you will find in him an excellent pupil.

Evarista. I wonder. [*Maliciously.*] Heaven knows who'll be teacher, and who pupil!

Marquis. As to the teacher, his presence allows me to speak out freely all the evil that I happen to think of him!

Evarista. Off with you; begone, Maximo, so that we can slander you freely!

Maximo. I'm going. Let your wicked tongues wag as they please. [*To the* MARQUIS.] Marquis, your humble servant. [*To* EVARISTA.] Good-bye, dear aunt.

Evarista. God be with you, my son.

Marquis. [*To* MAXIMO, *who is leaving.*] Until to-night . . . if they let me. [*To* EVARISTA.] Extraordinary man! His reputation compels esteem. Now that I know him and can myself appreciate his great talents, I venture to affirm that he hasn't his equal in the whole world!

Evarista. In the scientific world.

Marquis. And in all worlds, Señora, he has no match.

Evarista. Well, perhaps, for intellect.

Marquis. [*With enthusiasm.*] And for heart, too. Whom do you know more noble, more sincere?

Evarista. [*Not desiring to involve herself in a discussion of so delicate a nature.*] True, Marquis, true. [*Changing the subject.*] And so . . . you were saying . . . we must be there at five.

Marquis. On the stroke. I'll count on you and Electra.

Evarista. I don't know whether we ought to take her.

Marquis. Oh! I bear a special commission to secure the presence of the child at this great solemnity. And to think that I have been assuming all the airs of a great diplomat, and flattering myself that I should succeed! Virginia wants to make her acquaintance.

Don Urbano. In that case . . .

Marquis. You promise not to disappoint me?

Evarista. Well, you may count on Electra's presence.

Marquis. We'll have a great crowd—the best people, you know, socially and religiously. [*He rises to leave.*]

Don Urbano. The occasion will be most brilliant.

Marquis. Good-bye, for a little while. I must call on the Otumba's. I will let myself out this way. [ELECTRA's *voice is heard on the left with gay chatter and laughter. The* MARQUIS *stops to listen.*]

Electra. [*Within.*] Ha, ha . . . dear, just another kiss . . . silly you, silly me! but now we understand each other, don't we? [*She appears at the left with a large beautiful doll, which she kisses and rocks in her arms. She stops abashed and mortified.*]

Evarista. What are you doing, child?

Marquis. Don't scold her.

Electra. Mademoiselle Lulu and I were having a good time telling each other all sorts of things.

Don Urbano. [*To the* MARQUIS.] To-day she is in a mood for nonsense.

Electra. [*She withdraws, whispering to the doll. The rest watch her.*] Lulu, how sweet you are! But he is prettier. How happy with you will be my love, and I with both of you!

Marquis. Is she still so playful, so . . .

Evarista. Since yesterday we have observed a sadness in her which troubles us.

Marquis. Sadness, dreams. . . .

Evarista. And to-day you see . . .

Marquis. [*Affectionate, hastening to her.*] Electra, my sweet child. . . .

Electra. [*Bringing the face of the doll near that of the* MARQUIS.] Come, Mademoiselle, don't be unsociable; bestow on this kind gentleman just one little kiss. [*Before the* MARQUIS *kisses the doll,* ELECTRA *gives him a slight tap with the doll's head.*]

Marquis. Oh, how naughty! She hits me. [*Caressing the chin of* ELECTRA.] Lulu will not be offended, if I say that I like her little friend better than her?

Evarista. We two have but one mind!

Don Urbano. And what do you talk about with your doll?

Electra. Sometimes I tell her my troubles.

Evarista. Your troubles!

Electra. Yes, my troubles. And when you see us very quiet we are thinking about the past.

Marquis. The past interests her. A sign that she is reflective.

Evarista. But what do you mean by the past?

Electra. The time when I was born. [*Gravely.*] The day I came into the world was a very sad one, wasn't it? Can anyone of you remember it?

Evarista. What nonsense you are talking,

daughter! Aren't you ashamed to have the Marquis see how childish and foolish you can be?

Electra. You may be sure, aunt, fools are not foolish, or children childish, without good reason.

Marquis. Very true.

Evarista. And what reason can there be for this game which is so unbecoming you at your age?

Electra. [*Looking at the* MARQUIS, *who is smiling at her side.*] I can't tell you now.

Marquis. That's a hint for me to go.

Evarista. Child!

Marquis. I was going in any event. I'm sorry that my engagements do not allow me to enjoy any longer the pleasantries of this dear child. Farewell, Electra, I am coming back at five to take you with me.

Electra. To take me?

Don Urbano. Yes, daughter, we are going to the dedication of the convent de Las Esclavas.

Electra. And am I to go with you?

Evarista. You may go now and get ready.

Electra. [*Frightened.*] There will be a great crowd. Oh! and people terrify me. I like to be alone.

Marquis. You'll be quite at home there! But I must go!

Evarista. Au revoir, Marquis.

Marquis. [*To* ELECTRA.] At five, my girl; and we must be punctual. [*Exit by rear with* DON URBANO.]

Evarista. Explain to me now, pray, why you are so playful and restless.

Electra. You see, auntie: a doubt,—how shall I say?—problem . . .

Evarista. You, problems!

Electra. Exactly . . . in the plural . . . for I have more than one.

Evarista. How can that be?

Electra. I am trying to have them solved for me with just one or two words.

Evarista. And by whom?

Electra. [*Sighing.*] By one not in this world.

Evarista. Child!

Electra. My mother. Don't be surprised. My mother can speak to me, and counsel me Don't you believe that people now in the other world can return to ours? [*Gesture of incredulity from* EVARISTA.] You don't believe it? I do. I believe because I have seen . . . I have seen my mother.

Evarista. Holy Virgin, what ails this poor dear head of yours?

Electra. When I was little, about so tall . .

Evarista. Among the Ursulines of Bayonne?

Electra. Yes, my mother appeared to me.

Evarista. In dreams, naturally.

Electra. No, no; while I was as much awake as I am now. [*She leaves the doll on a chair.*]

Evarista. Be careful, Electra, of what you say.

Electra. When I was very sad, very lonesome or sick, when anyone wounded me by making me realize my desolate condition in the world, my mother used to come and comfort me. At first I saw her vaguely, vanishing, confused, with distant objects, with things close at hand. She grew in clearness, in brightness, came towards me, trembling, like this. Then she ceased to tremble. Aunt, she was so still, so still, so sad. She was my mother; I could not doubt it. At first when I used to see her, she would be exquisitely gowned as a great lady. There came a day when she appeared in a nun's habit. No one who did not see her then dressed in dark serge, her face in a white hood—can imagine her beauty and majesty.

Evarista. My poor child, you are talking nonsense . . .

Electra. When she drew near, she stretched out her arms to embrace me. She spoke to me in a voice so soft, so far away, so hushed. I don't know how to explain it. I asked her questions and she replied to me . . . [*Greater incredulity on* EVARISTA'S *part.*] But don't you believe me?

Evarista. Go on, my child, go on.

Electra. At the Ursulines I had a beautiful doll I called Lulu; and, auntie, it was so mysterious; whenever I went walking in the garden towards evening, all alone with my doll in my arms,—she as sad as I—I would always see, against the sky, the vision of my mother . . . first up among the branches, like a figure outlined by the leaves; then her form grew clearer against the dark trunks of the trees.

Evarista. And then when you were a little older and living in Hendaye, also?

Electra. The first few years nothing occurred. I was playing then with living dolls; the children of my cousin, Rosaura, a boy and a girl, who never left my side; they loved me, and I loved them. But one night in the solitude of my chamber, while the children were

asleep in their beds . . . over there—my bed was here [*She points.*]—Mother appeared between us, coming towards me—

Evarista. Oh! Stop, for Heaven's sake. You frighten me. But these visions, child, have ceased since you have grown older?

Electra. When I was no longer with dolls and children. And that's why I want to be a little girl again. I try to return to childhood in the hope that when I am what I was then, my mother may come back to me, and we may talk, and she may answer the questions I long to ask her and then she may advise me.

Evarista. And what are you in such doubt about?

Electra. [*Her eyes cast down.*] Oh, some things one wishes one knew about, but can't make sure of . . .

Evarista. Good gracious! And what can this serious matter be in which you need counsel and advice?

Electra. Ah! a . . . [*Hesitates; she is almost at the point of telling.*]

Evarista. What? Tell me.

Electra. A . . . [*With girlish timidity, stroking the doll and not daring to tell her secret.*] Something . . .

Evarista. [*Severely , but fondly.*] I have no patience with such childishness. Electra, you simple-minded little girl, you are indeed a prodigy of cleverness and charm, except when you're the paragon of silliness. Demons are contending with the angels for your soul. My daughter, we must step in and take our own part in the struggle. We must beat back the evil spirits even though in their fall they bruise our heart. [*Kisses her.*] But serious matters aside. You must busy yourself with something that will distract and cheer you. Don't forget that at five . . . Go and get ready now.

Electra. Yes, aunt.

Evarista. You have plenty of time, three-quarters of an hour.

Electra. I will not be late.

Evarista. And don't play any antics, Electra. . . . Take care . . . ! [*Exit by the rear, dangling the doll by one arm.*]

Electra. [*Looking at her doll.*] My poor ill-used Lulu! [*Mimics the attitude of the doll as if it were a live being in pain.*] And how it hurts, ah! [*Seats herself, meditating.*] And he's waiting for me! How sad was the separation! He wept as he stretched out his arms, and I promised him I should return.

Patros. [*Appearing cautiously at the left.*] Señorita, Señorita!

Electra. Come in.

Patros. [*Advancing stealthily.*] Is anyone here?

Electra. We are alone.

Patros. There's no time like the present, Señorita. Now or never.

Electra. Do you come from over there?

Patros. It's from there I come . . . Many gentlemen counting up figures, millions and oh! billions! There is nobody within.

Electra. [*Hesitating.*] Shall we dare to . . . ?

Patros. Don't be afraid.

Electra. Holy Virgin, protect me! [*Turning toward the door, exit to the garden. She stops, frightened.*] Wait. We'd better go out by the other way! Won't my aunt suddenly appear at the dining-room window?

Patros. You are right. We'd better go this way! [*Points to the left.*]

Electra. Yes, this way. Oh, my soul, courage—fear! [*Exeunt running to the left.*]

[Don Urbano *and* José *enter from the rear, just as the girls leave.*]

Don Urbano. Who goes there?

José. It's Patros, sir.

Don Urbano. And so . . . tell me.

José. There are now five whom I've seen making love to the young lady. Heaven only knows how many more there are that I haven't seen.

Don Urbano. And what do they do? Do they prowl around the house?

José. Two in the morning, two in the afternoon, and the fifth, the little fellow, from sunrise to sunrise!

Don Urbano. Have you observed any communication between Electra's room and the street by means of any basket or telephone wire?

José. I have noticed nothing of that sort. But my advice would be to have the young lady moved to the rooms over there. [*Points to the left.*]

Don Urbano. Does anyone of those intriguers steal secretly into the garden?

José. Ha! wouldn't I give him a good thwacking if he did!

Don Urbano. Bravo! continue your watch

[Cuesta *enters from the rear, with letters and papers.*]

Don Urbano. Leonardo, thank Heaven!

Cuesta. I told you I wouldn't come in the

morning. [*To* José, *giving him a letter.*] Have this registered. Quick! Then mail my letters. [*Exit* José.]

Don Urbano. [*Taking a paper that* Cuesta *gives him.*] What is this?

Cuesta. The receipt for the hundred thousand and odd . . . Now sign me a cheque for seventy-seven thousand.

Don Urbano. Yes, for the offering at Rome.

Cuesta. And Evarista?

Don Urbano. Is dressing.

Cuesta. I know already that you're going to the dedication of Las Esclavas, and that you will take Electra along.

Don Urbano. Yes indeed, for we can't expect any good thing from this child. Every day some fresh extravagance, some new irregularity.

Cuesta. [*Emphatically.*] Which does not argue that anything is wrong.

Don Urbano. Mere symptons, mind you, but symptoms. That is why Evarista, who is foresight itself, has thought of putting her through a disciplinary course in the convent of San José de la penitencia.

Cuesta. Permit me, my dear Don Urbano, to differ from you. You did not consult me, to be sure.

Don Urbano. Do not apologize . . . As a friend of the family you may give us your opinion and advice.

Cuesta. Consigning to the cloistral life young girls who have not shown a taste for a vocation is a most dangerous custom. And you should not be surprised if somebody opposes.

Don Urbano. Who?

Cuesta. Somebody, I say. There is in the life of this girl an unknown factor. A better day may come . . . I don't assure you that it will come . . . a better day, when, if you shut the girl up against her will, you will hear a voice crying, "stop."

Don Urbano. And we shall reply, "Good, Señor Unknown Factor, you may have her and much good may she do you. You free us of a tiresome and onerous charge."

Cuesta. [*Conscious of extreme fatigue, seats himself.*] That is to say, Urbano, suppose . . .

Don Urbano. Do you feel unwell? Do you want anything?

Cuesta. No. This wretched heart doesn't work as well as one could wish.

Don Urbano. Rest, man. Why don't you relax a minute?

Cuesta. But do you know what I have to do? [*Extracting papers.*] Here are two very urgent letters which must be written to-day.

Don Urbano. Write them here. [*Choosing a place on the table, and pushing aside books and papers.*]

Cuesta. Yes, I will get to work here.

Don Urbano. I also shall be very busy. I have a thousand trifles.

Cuesta. Don't concern yourself about me. [*Writing.*]

Don Urbano. Pardon me, Leonardo. Evarista will not be long in coming.

Cuesta. [*Without looking up.*] Good-bye for the present. [Don Urbano *goes out by the rear.*]

[Electra *and* Patros *suddenly appear at the left door, as if reconnoitering the ground.*]

Electra. Careful, Patros. It is hard to get past here.

Patros. [*Recognizing* Cuesta, *whose back they see while he writes.*] Don Leonardo!

Cuesta. [*Hearing the voices, turns.*] Ah, Electra!

Electra. Do we disturb you, Don Leonardo?

Cuesta. No, my dear. Do me the favor to wait a little, while I finish this letter. I want to talk with you.

Electra. I will be here, señor. [*Aside to* Patros.] What a bother! [*Aloud.*] We only came to look for a paper and pencil for Patros to make a note . . . [*Takes a pencil and paper from the table. Aside to* Patros, *speaking of* Maximo's *child.*] For Heaven's sake, take good care of him. Oh, how pretty he is when asleep. Little mouth, dirty hands, and little nails black as can be from digging in the ground! I could just eat him up!

Patros. And his curly hair, and little feet . . . !

Electra. [*With an outburst of feeling.*] Oh, I'll go mad with love for him! Take care of him, Patros; see that . . .

Patros. I'll give him two cakes now.

Electra. No, no; that will injure his digestion. Bring him a little soup.

Patros. And how shall I carry that?

Electra. True. Ask for a cup of milk for me.

Patros. Right! I'll see he gets it when he wakes up.

Electra. Here's the paper and pencil for him to scrawl his pictures with. That's what he gets most fun out of. Then, to-night, we

will find some opportunity of bringing him to my room and he can sleep with me.

Cuesta. [*Closing the letter.*] I've finished now.

Electra. Pardon me a moment, Don Leonardo. [*Aside to* PATROS.] Don't leave him a minute. Be careful. If Don Leonardo doesn't entertain me tremendously I'll manage to go to him and give him a kiss before dressing.

Cuesta. Patros.

Patros. Señor.

Cuesta. Have my letter sent to the mail.

Patros. Immediately. [*Exit.*]

Cuesta. [*Taking* ELECTRA'S *hands.*] Come to me, my Lady Playful! What a great pleasure it is to see you!

Electra. Do you love me a great deal, Don Leonardo? If you only knew how much I like to have people love me!

Cuesta. The important thing, my daughter, is that we should enter on some formal relation, so that prudish people will have no fault to find. I have heard . . . I think there must be some exaggeration . . . I have heard that admirers swarm about you.

Electra. Oh, yes! indeed, I can hardly count them. But I love only one.

Cuesta. Only one? And he?

Electra. Oh, you want to know a great deal.

Cuesta. Do I know him?

Electra. Well, I should say so!

Cuesta. Has he yet made any definite declaration of his suit?

Electra. Oh, no; not any declaration. He hasn't said anything to me. But still . . .

Cuesta. The dear boy is timid. And do you call such a one—a suitor?

Electra. I don't call him that.

Cuesta. And do you love him, and know or believe that he returns your love?

Electra. That's it . . . I believe . . . I can't be sure of it.

Cuesta. And can't you tell me . . . me, who . . . ?

Electra. Oh, no!

Cuesta. For Heaven's sake, confide in me.

Electra. I can't tell you now. I have to dress!

Cuesta. Very well; we'll talk later.

Electra. [*With anxious looks to the rear.*] Is my aunt coming?

Cuesta. Go and dress. . . . To-morrow . . .

Electra. Yes, to-morrow. Good-bye. [*Runs toward the right. Moved by a sudden impulse, she turns.*] But first I must . . . [*Aside.*] I can't resist the temptation. I want to kiss him again. [*She goes off running to the left.* CUESTA *follows her with his gaze. He sighs.*]

Cuesta. [*Collecting his papers.*] How happy I should be if I could openly show my affection for her!

Evarista. [*Enters, dressed to go out.*] Pardon the delay, Leonardo. Urbano has already told me that we are undertaking another financial enterprise on a large scale.

Don Urbano. [*Who has entered, giving* CUESTA *a receipt.*] Here it is.

Evarista. I shall not be surprised to see you come in with another freight of gold. It is God's will, and God, not ourselves, shall receive it. [ELECTRA *appears at the left. On seeing her aunt, she hesitates, but finally enters.* EVARISTA *sees her and stops her.*] Oh, for shame! Why haven't you dressed? Where were you?

Electra. In the ironing room. I went to see if Patros would iron me a dress.

Evarista. And you stand there so unconcerned? [*Observing that a letter sticks out from a pocket of* ELECTRA'S *apron.*] What have you here? [*Catches her sleeve.*]

Electra. A letter.

Cuesta. Child's play.

Evarista. You can't imagine, dear Cuesta, what vexations this girl causes me with her childish pranks that aren't so innocent, after all, as they seem. [*Gives the letter to her husband.*] Read it.

Cuesta. Let's see.

Don Urbano. [*Reads.*] "My Dear Señorita, I feel that for me in thy bewitching countenance . . . "

Evarista. [*Mockingly.*] How exquisite!

[ELECTRA *with difficulty restrains her laughter.*]

Don Urbano. "In thy bewitching countenance, the Supreme Artificer of the Universe has written the secret . . . [*He cannot decipher the word.*]

Electra. [*Prompting him.*] "Of the Cosmos."

Don Urbano. That's it. "Of the Cosmos, symbolizing in thy starry glance, in thy celestial lips, the mighty agent . . . "

Evarista. [*Tearing away the letter.*] What disgraceful rubbish!

Don Urbano. [*Finding another letter in the other pocket.*] Well, here we have another. [*Snatches it.*]

Cuesta. Let's see, let's see that one.

Evarista. Daughter, you are a regular letter-box.

Cuesta. [*Reading.*] "Merciless Electra, with what words shall I express my desperation, my madness, my frenzy . . . "

Evarista. Enough . . . That's no longer innocent. [*Embarrassed, searching* ELECTRA'S *pockets.*] I suspect that there are more.

Cuesta. Spare her, Evarista.

Electra. Auntie, don't be offended.

Evarista. Don't be offended, indeed? I will put an end to this, once and for all. Go and dress.

Don Urbano. It's almost time now.

Electra. I'll be ready in an instant.

Evarista. Go at once.

[*Relieved to get away,* ELECTRA *runs to her room.*

Evarista. [*With sadness and dismay.*] Now you see, Leonardo.

Cuesta. The calmness with which she saw her secrets revealed proves that there is little or no wrong in her!

Evarista. Ah! I don't think so, no, no.

Pantoja. [*From the rear, in repressed tones.*] Here they are . . . and Cuesta too, so that one can't talk freely . . .

Evarista. [*Pleased to see him.*] At last you are here . . . [*Two groups are formed; at the left,* CUESTA *seated,* DON URBANO *standing; at the right,* PANTOJA *and* EVARISTA *seated.*]

Pantoja. I have come to bring you tidings of the utmost seriousness.

Evarista. [*In alarm.*] Oh, God's will be done.

Pantoja. [*Repeating the phrase significantly.*] God's will be done. But let us desire what God decrees and apply your energies to overcoming evil with good, cost what it may.

Evarista. Your courage fortifies my spirit. Good. I am ready to hear your tidings.

Pantoja. To-day in the house of the Requesens, they have spoken of the child in the most shameless terms. They said that, pursued by a crowd of admirers, she takes pleasure in dispatching and receiving notes at all hours of the day.

Evarista. Unfortunately, Salvador, the frivolities of the girl are such that with all my affection for her I cannot rally to her defence.

Pantoja. [*Pained.*] That is not all. Listen, and see how human viciousness has no limits! Last night the Marquis de Ronda, at a party in his house, praised Electra's graces to Virginia, his saintly wife, and other persons of the strictest honour in language that was indecorous and carnal.

Evarista. Let us exercise the virtue of patience.

Pantoja. Patience? Always patience. A virtue of little value when not kindled by resolution. Let us resolve, my dear friend, to place Electra where she will not behold such examples of levity nor ever hear a word of wicked import.

Evarista. Where she may breathe the atmosphere of austere virtue.

Pantoja. Where the buzz of suitors, poisonous and shameless, may not disturb her. At the critical age, when character is in the formative stage, we must preserve her from the greatest danger, from the incalculable horrible danger . . .

Evarista. What danger?

Pantoja. Man! I say MAN! There is nothing more evil than man, man . . . when he is not holy. I know it in myself; I have been my own teacher. My disorder, from which, by the grace of God, I recovered, and then my painful convalescence, taught me the cure of souls. You must let me, yes, you must let me . . . I *will* save the child . . .

[DON URBANO *interrupts him, passing to the group at the right.*]

Don Urbano. [*With keen interest.*] Do you know what Cuesta tells me? Amid the crowd of suitors there is an elect one! Electra herself has confessed to him.

Evarista. And who may he be? [*Goes from the right to the left,* PANTOJA *and* URBANO *remaining at the right.*]

Don Urbano. [*To* PANTOJA.] This may change the nature of our problem.

Pantoja. [*With ill-humour.*] But what does her preference signify? Is it real love, or headstrong, feverish fancy? One of the sort that is the most serious symptom of the madness of our own age? [*Much excited, raising his voice.*] Because we must know, Urbano, we must absolutely know!

Don Urbano. We shall know.

Pantoja. [*To* CUESTA.] And you, my dear Cuesta, didn't you cross examine her?

Evarista. [*In the center, to* DON URBANO.] Try to ascertain . . .

Cuesta. [*Somewhat vexed, replying to* PANTOJA.] It seems to me that you display an excessive and undesirable zeal.

Pantoja. [*With a suavity that does not hide*

his imperious temper.] My zeal, Leonardo, is no greater than it should be.

Cuesta. [*A little wounded.*] I, as a friend of the family, thought . . .

Pantoja. [*Walks over to* DON URBANO *at the right.*] Cuesta minds too assiduously what is none of his business.

Cuesta. [*To* EVARISTA, *without caring whether* PANTOJA *hears him.*] Our friend Pantoja takes too much upon himself—interfering in the concerns of other people.

Evarista. [*To* CUESTA, *without knowing what explanation to give him.*] It is as a very old and loyal friend of ours . . .

Cuesta. And such am I also.

Don Urbano. [*Looking toward the rear.*] Here comes the Marquis de Ronda.

[*Enter the* MARQUIS.]

Marquis. What good fortune do I find!

Pantoja. [*Aside.*] What ill fortune arrives!

Marquis. [*After saluting* EVARISTA.] And Electra?

Evarista. She will shortly come.

Marquis. [*Saluting all.*] We have not too much time now.

Don Urbano. It's time to go. [PANTOJA, *impatient, waits for* ELECTRA *at her door.* CUESTA *talks with* DON URBANO.]

Pantoja. [*With glee, announcing her.*] Here she comes! [ELECTRA *enters on the right, dressed with elegant simplicity and distinction.*]

Marquis. [*Pleased and eulogistic.*] Oh, how beautiful!

Electra. [*With evident satisfaction, turning so that they can see her on every side.*] Gentlemen, what have you to say?

Cuesta. Divine!

Marquis. Ideal!

Evarista. Well enough, my daughter . . .

Pantoja. [*Fretful at the praise bestowed upon* ELECTRA.] Shall we go?

[*They prepare to leave.* BALBINA *suddenly bursts in upon the scene from the left, choking with excitement.*]

Balbina. Señora, Señora! [*General alarm.*]

All. [*Except* ELECTRA.] What has happened?

Balbina. What has the Señorita done?

Electra. [*Aside, stamping her foot.*] I am discovered.

Balbina. Lord, Lord! What wild tricks she will be up to! [*Laughing.*] Who would believe it? In the name of all the saints!

Evarista. [*Impatient.*] Out with it!

Electra. I'll confess if they'll allow me to. I went over . . .

Balbina. She went over to the house of Don Maximo and robbed him, for it's just like a robbery. Oh, how funny!

Don Urbano. Well, and she took . . .

Balbina. The baby boy. [*All look at* ELECTRA, *who soon recovers from her alarm, and adopts a serene and grave attitude.*]

Evarista. Why, daughter!

Pantoja. Oh, child, dear child!

Balbina. He was in the house asleep. The Señorita and that crazy Patros came in on tip-toe, carried him off, and they brought him over to our house.

Evarista. How absurd!

Pantoja. [*Hiding his irritation.*] And furthermore, hardly becoming.

Electra. [*With effusion.*] Auntie, I love him so! and he loves me so!

Marquis. [*Enthusiastically.*] What a girl!

Cuesta. One who deserves to be forgiven!

Evarista. Maximo will be furious.

Balbina. José ran to tell him, so we'll soon know.

Don Urbano. And the baby, where is he?

Balbina. The Señorita hid him in Patros' room, intending to carry him off for the night to her own room and to keep him there with her. [*Smiles from all the gentlemen, except* PANTOJA, *who frowns.*] The little one awoke a short while ago, and Patros gave him a biscuit to amuse him. I hear him cry. I hurry and catch sight of him. Holy Virgin, I try to take him up, but he won't let me. I have to punish him . . .

Electra. [*Running toward the left instinctively.*] Sweetheart!

Pantoja. [*Tries to stop her.*] No.

Evarista. [*Grasps her by one arm.*] Stop.

Balbina. [*At the left door.*] From this distance you can hear his screams.

Electra. My poor little darling!

Evarista. Let him be taken home.

Electra. Nobody shall touch him. He is mine. [*She frees herself from* EVARISTA *and* PANTOJA, *who try to hold her, and quickly runs out to the left.*]

Pantoja. [*Angry, stopping at the left.*] What undignified conduct!

José. [*In haste from the garden.*] Señora . . .

Evarista. What does Maximo have to say?

José. He knew nothing about it. He is with some gentlemen. When I told him he burst

out laughing. Why, he was so cool! He said that Señorita would take excellent care of the child.

Don Urbano. Such coolness!

Evarista. [*To* José.] Go, take the baby home. So that foolish child may learn.

Marquis. And I venture to suggest that she be allowed to play with so sweet a toy!

[Electra *enters at the left with the child in her arms. The child is about two years old.*]

Electra. Darling of my soul!

Evarista. For Heaven's sake, daughter, leave him, and let's go.

Don Urbano. [*Hurrying them.*] We'll arrive late . . .

Cuesta. [*To the* Marquis.] It's a revelation of the maternal instinct. I applaud it.

Marquis. And I hold it divine.

Evarista. [*Wishing to take the child from her.*] Come, Electra.

Electra. [*She slips lightly away from those who try to take the child from her. The boy clings to* Electra's *neck.*] No, I can't leave him now. I can't.

Evarista. Take him, Balbina.

Electra. No, no. [*Runs from side to side, for safety.*]

Don Urbano. Give him to me.

Electra. No.

Pantoja. [*Haughtily to* José.] Take him, you!

Electra. No. He is mine.

Evarista. But, child, we must be going.

Electra. You may go then. [*Her hat annoys her, touching the child's brow, when she kisses him; she tears it off, and throws it away. She continues walking about with the child, eluding those who try to take him from her.*]

Evarista. Enough of this, are you coming or not?

Electra. [*Without paying attention, talking to the little one, who throws his arms about her neck and kisses her.*] Go to sleep, sweetheart. Don't be afraid, my little darling boy. I'll not let you go.

Evarista. But are we going, or not?

Electra. I'm not going. Are you hungry, my little love? Are you thirsty? See how the poor dear child clings to me, begging me not to leave him. Selfish folk! Don't you know he has no mother?

Pantoja. But he has someone to take care of him.

Evarista. [*Haughtily to the servants.*] Here! Enough of this! Take him home at once, I say.

Electra. [*Resolutely, without allowing the child to be taken away.*] Home! Yes, home! [*With resolute step and without looking at anyone, she runs toward the garden, and goes out. . . . All look after her in amazement without venturing to follow her.*]

Pantoja. What a scene!

Evarista. What lack of feeling!

Marquis. [*Aside.*] Excess of feeling, rather. She has found the only way.

ACT THREE

Laboratory of Maximo. *The rear wall consists in part of a partition, its lower sections of wood, the upper of glass, separating the front of the stage from a large room full of electrical apparatus. At the side of this partition, a door into the street. At the right, foreground, a narrow passage leads to the garden of* Garcia Yuste. *At the rear a door opens into* Maximo's *private apartment and another into the kitchen. Between the two doors, a bookstand. At the left, a door into the room where the assistants are working. Next to this door, a shelf with instruments and other apparatus. In the rear, along the partition, up to its glass sections, are shelves crowded with bottles, jars and some books. In the angle at the right a small sideboard. At the left of the stage, the laboratory table on which lie the objects mentioned in the dialogue. At an angle with this, a stand of masonry supporting a delicate balance. In the center a small dining table, four seats.*

Maximo, *working intently at a mathematical problem;* Electra *stands, putting in order the many things on the table; books, capsules, test-tubes, etc. She is simply dressed and wears a white apron.*

Maximo. The double tale, Electra, you told me about this supposed authority of the two old gentlemen, is a matter of no importance . . . in my opinion. [*Without raising his eyes from the paper.*]

Electra. [*Sighing.*] Heaven grant you are right.

Maximo. It amounts merely to two platonic paternities that have no legal status . . . so far. The worst thing about it all is . . . the guardianship Señor Pantoja wants to assume.

Electra. A guardianship that would oppress

me, that wouldn't allow me to breathe. Please don't mention it!

Maximo. Really?

Electra. Please, for what is worse, I get into that strange state when my head and nerves . . . I have already told you of certain times in my life when I yearned intensely to see my poor mother as I saw her in my childhood. As the tyranny, you see, of Pantoja increases,—this longing takes possession of my soul; and with it, I feel the nervous and mental disturbance that foreshadows . . .

Maximo. The vision of your mother? My girl, this is unworthy of a strong character. Get control of your imagination. Come, to work! Sloth's the chief source of mental disorders.

Electra. [*Much encouraged.*] I will take your advice. [*Takes some bottles of chemicals and carries them to one of the stands.*] This is the proper place. Here too, I need not give any thought to my aunt's indignation when she finds out . . .

Maximo. [*Intent upon his work.*] You shall have your way! As though your prank of yesterday, when you stole away the little boy, were not enough, you stayed longer than usual when you brought him back; and to-day, to make amends, you have moved over to my house, and so here you are as gay and cool as ever. Thank Heaven, for the timely absence of our aunt and uncle! Invited by the Requesens to attend the distribution of prizes and the lunch at Santa Clara, they know nothing of the flight of their enfant terrible from their house to mine!

Electra. You advised me to rebel!

Maximo. Just so. I have been the instigator of your crime, and I don't repent.

Electra. My conscience tells me there is nothing wrong in this.

Maximo. Aren't you in the house and in the company of a gentleman?

Electra. [*Talking at her work.*] Of course. And I may add, as you are overwhelmed with work, alone, without servants,—and as I have nothing else to do,—it is very natural.

Maximo. That you should come to take care of me and my children? If that isn't logic, well, logic has fled from the earth!

Electra. Poor little boys! All the world knows that I adore them; they are my passion, my weakness . . . [Maximo *absorbed in an experiment does not attend to what she is saying.*] And it even seems to me . . . [*She approaches the table carrying some books which were out of their place.*]

Maximo. [*Arouses from his abstraction.*] What did you say?

Electra. That their mother did not love them more than I.

Maximo. [*Satisfied with the result of his calculation, reads aloud a number.*] Zero, three hundred and eighteen. Kindly bring me the "Table of Resistance" . . . that red book, yonder.

Electra. [*Running to the stand at the right.*] This one?

Maximo. The shelf above.

Electra. Yes, yes . . . how stupid! [*Taking the book, she brings it to him.*]

Maximo. It is wonderful how in so short a time you know my books, and just where to lay your hands on them.

Electra. Confess, that I have put everything in perfect order.

Maximo. Thank Heaven, my study is clean and tidy.

Electra. [*Much pleased.*] Isn't it true, Maximo, that I am not totally useless?

Maximo. [*Looking at her attentively.*] There's nothing in the whole world without some good purpose. Who will dare say you were not created for great things? That you are not . . . ?

Electra. [*Anxiously.*] Well, what?

Maximo. A great soul, beautiful, noble-minded, if half-smothered yet in the sawdust and under the periwig of a doll.

Electra. [*Very much pleased.*] Oh, Heaven, if I were that! [Maximo *rises, and takes up some bars of metal from the stand and examines them.*] Don't tell me, for I'll go wild with joy. May I sing now?

Maximo. Yes, little one, yes. [*As she works,* Electra *repeats the andante of a sonata.*] Good music is like the spur to lazy ideas that won't trot and gallop; it is like a hook that draws up the ideas lurking in the depths of the imagination. Sing, my girl, sing. [*Continues intent upon his experiments.*]

Electra. [*At the stand in the rear.*] I'll put order here. The metalloids to this side. I know them well by the colour of their labels. What fun! I would like to spend the whole live-long day here.

Maximo. [*Jovially.*] Eh, comrade!

Electra. [*Running to his side.*] What be the commands of the Marvellous Magician?

Maximo. I do not command now; I beg.

[*He picks up a glass jar containing metal filing.*] Since Electra, the playful kitten, wants to work at my side, let her do me the favour to weigh out thirty grammes of this metal.

Electra. Gladly.

Maximo. You learned yesterday how to weigh things on that delicate balance.

Electra. [*Much pleased.*] Yes, of course, give it to me, let me do it. [*On noticing the metal in the glass jar, she admires its beauty.*] How pretty! What is it?

Maximo. Aluminum. It is like you; little specific gravity, light.

Electra. Little gravity? Light?

Maximo. But it is very strong. [*Looking her in the face.*] Are you strong?

Electra. In some things, that I won't mention, strong even to hardness, and I think that if circumstances required I could be strong even to martyrdom. [*She continues weighing.*]

Maximo. In what things can you be hard?

Electra. They are no concern of yours.

Maximo. [*Attending to his work.*] Good. Weigh me at once seventy grammes of copper. [*Handing her another glass jar.*]

Electra. The copper . . . that's like you? Oh, no, for it is too ugly.

Maximo. But very useful.

Electra. No, no; you shall be compared only with gold; that is very precious.

Maximo. Come, come, no play. You distract me, Electra; you positively demoralize me!

Electra. Let me amuse myself with the properties of this pretty metal which is like me. I am strong . . . I do not break . . . Say that to Evarista and Urbano, who in their sermon to me told me as many as forty times to-day, that I am fragile . . . Fragile and slight!

Maximo. They don't know what they are talking about.

Electra. Of course; what do they know . . . !

Maximo. Be careful, Electra; if you talk so much you may make an error in the weight.

Electra. An error? How absurd! I have more sense than you think.

Maximo. Indeed I keep on finding that out. [*Turns to one of the shelves in search of a crucible.*] Well, your aunt will be seriously angry, and it will take a great deal of trouble to convince her of your innocence.

Electra. God sees the heart and He knows there is nothing wrong in this. Why shouldn't they allow me to be here all day long, to take care of you, help you?

Maximo. [*Returning with the crucible he wanted.*] Because you are a young lady; and young ladies are not supposed to remain alone in a house of a man, however upright and honourable a gentleman!

Electra. What a good time we poor young ladies are supposed to have! [*Having finished the weighing, she hands him the weighed amounts of metal in porcelain saucers.*] Look: here they are.

Maximo. [*Takes the saucers.*] Well done! What skill and what lightness of touch! What a steady hand, little girl, and what cool attention to business, not to let work and play interfere. You have self-command.

Electra. Say rather contentment. Where joy is, all goes well.

Maximo. True, absolutely true. [*Empties the two ingredients into the crucible.*]

Electra. Is that a crucible?

Maximo. Yes, in which to fuse these two metals.

Electra. There we shall be fused, you and I . . . we shall fight with one another in the midst of the fire, and . . . [*Hums the sonata.*]

Maximo. Do call Mariano, please.

Electra. [*Running to the door at the left.*] Mariano!

Maximo. I want Gil also.

Electra. Gil! Quick! The master is calling you. [*Hurrying them.*] Come along.

[*Enter* Mariano *and* Gil, *the first dressed as a labourer in a blouse, the second in an ordinary suit, with sleeve-protectors, and with a pen over his ear.*]

Gil. [*Showing a calculation.*] Here's the result I get.

Maximo. [*Reads the number rapidly.*] 0,158,073? . . . Wrong! [*Sure of what he says, and with some harshness.*] It is not possible that for a diameter in a cable of less than four millimeters, we should obtain a greater circuit! The real distance ought to be less than two hundred kilometers.

Gil. Well, I don't know. Señor, I . . . I . . . I . . . [*In confusion.*]

Maximo. It's wrong. I see your mind has been distracted.

Electra. You do not pay strict attention.

Maximo. While engaged in these calculations your wits have been a-wool-gathering.

Electra. [*Scolding him.*] And you talk of

bull-fights, of theaters, of a thousand frivolous things. So everything, of course, goes wrong.

Gil. I will try it again, sir.

Maximo. Put your mind on it this time, Gil.

Electra. And above all, plenty of patience, keeping all your wits about you, or we shan't get at anything.

Gil. I am going . . .

Electra. Quick, and be at it. [GIL *goes out.*]

Maximo. [*To* MARIANO, *handing him the metals.*] Here you are.

Mariano. To fuse . . .

Maximo. Have you prepared the furnace?

Mariano. Yes, sir.

Maximo. Get it ready, and when it is about to fuse, advise me. With this alloy we shall make a new test of conductibility. I hope to reach two hundred kilometers with a very slight loss.

Mariano. Shall we make the test this afternoon?

Maximo. [*Intent again on his work.*] Yes, I shall never give up this problem. It is a fixed idea with me. It won't let me rest until I have proved it.

Electra. I, too, have a fixed idea, and I live for it.

Maximo. [*To* ELECTRA.] On, and on! [*To* MARIANO.] Always on, and on!

Mariano. Any further orders, sir?

Maximo. Hurry up that fusion!

Electra. Yes, the fusion, Mariano . . . See that the two metals are thoroughly combined.

Mariano. The two, Señorita, shall be made one. [MARIANO *goes out, taking the metals.*]

Electra. Not two, but one.

Maximo. [*Preparing for another experiment.*] Now my dear pupil . . .

Electra. Excuse me, my lord Magician, I must see if the children are awake.

Maximo. True, how long since they ate?

Electra. Three quarters of an hour. They ought to sleep a half hour longer. Are my orders right?

Maximo. Yes, my child, all your orders are right.

Electra. Take care of what you are saying!

Maximo. I know what I am saying.

Electra. That every order of mine is right?

Maximo. Every one of them.

Electra. Remember what you have said. I go, but return on the wings of the wind. [*Light of foot, she runs out singing, by the door on the right into the domestic apartment. Just as she goes out, the workman enters by the rear.*]

Maximo. What is it?

Workman. That gentleman, the Marquis de Ronda, has returned!

Maximo. And why didn't he come in?

Workman. He asked if he might see you. I told him that you had a visitor. And he, as if he were quite at home, said, "Oh, yes, I know . . . Miss Electra. I won't go in now." And he went away.

Maximo. [*With spirit.*] I understand. Why didn't you announce him? How foolish!

Workman. He said he would return.

Maximo. Well, if he returns, even should the Señorita Electra still be here—and all the better if she is—let him come right in!

Workman. Very well, sir. [*Goes out by the rear.*]

Electra. [*Returning from the interior.*] They are sleeping like two little angels. I'll leave their little tired bodies one half hour longer to their rest and dreams.

Maximo. Daughter, we ought to look out for our bodies, big or little. Shall we have lunch?

Electra. As soon as you wish. I'll have everything ready at once. [*Turns to the sideboard where she has the dinner service, cutlery, table-cloth, napkins and fruit dish.*]

Maximo. I like that. Everything always ready at once. That's the way to have things done.

Electra. [*Spreads the table-cloth.*] It is the way—and I try. But alas, with all my skill, I shall not succeed.

Maximo. Let me help you set the table. [ELECTRA *gives him plates and cutlery, the wine, the bread.*] Yes, you will succeed.

Electra. Do you think so?

Maximo. As certain as that . . . that I am as hungry as a pack of wolves!

Electra. I am glad. To-day you will have to make out with the lunch my poor hands have prepared for you.

Maximo. Bring it on, and let us see!

Electra. Immediately. [*Runs into the interior.*]

Maximo. Every word, every gesture, every act of this precious little woman in the abandonment of her joy, is the natural radiation of her restless spirit—full of a noble ambition to utter itself in ardent affection and superior virtue. [*Ardently.*] God bless her for bringing happiness and light into this sad, dismal hole

of science, and changing with her grace this desert into a Paradise. God bless her, who comes to rescue from his abstraction this poor Faust, old at thirty-five, and to tell him "man does not really live by scientific truth alone." [GIL *interrupts him, having entered a little before; he approaches without being seen.*]

Gil. [*Showing the calculation with satisfaction.*] Here it is; I believe I have got the right figure this time.

Maximo. [*Takes the paper and looks at it vaguely without fixing his attention on it.*] Accuracy? When you have had your fill of it—doesn't the soul still crave the ideal, and pursue it, recking not whether the paths lead to truth or error, to the real or the false? [*Reads mechanically.*] 0,318,73 . . . [*Then looks at it carefully.*] Gil, there's some excuse for our mistakes in such calculations.

Gil. Yes, sir. One is easily distracted by thoughts of . . .

Maximo. Vague, indefinite, charming things, and then mere numbers will play truant—vanish into thin air . . .

Gil. And there's no catching them. My thoughts wandered and I mistook the potential for the resistance. I found my error. Tell me, is it right now?

Maximo. [*Reads.*] 0,318,73. [*With a sudden burst of joy.*] And what if it were not, Gil? You have refreshed your mind with delightful ideas, with beautiful, poetic images,—and you have made a mistake? Well, what of it? Our mistress, our tyrant "accuracy," will have to pardon us.

Gil. Ah, sir, she does not pardon. She is very severe. She oppresses us, she enslaves us, she does not allow us so much as to breathe.

Maximo. Not to-day. She is indulgent to-day. Our mistress, usually so gloomy, smiles on us to-day complacently. Do you see these figures?

Gil. [*Speaking from memory, much pleased.*] 0,318,73.

Maximo. Well, I tell you that the greatest poets of the world, Homer and Virgil, Dante, Lope, Calderon, never wrote a strophe as inspired and poetic as are these poor numbers to me! To be sure they lack harmony, poetic charm. They're prose—not verse. Go, you may go to dinner. Leave me, leave us . . . [*Gently pushes him out of the room.*] I do not know myself; I too am confused. I am on fire with eagerness. What's become of my usual serenity? It is she, she . . . [*From a suitable place on the stage, he looks toward the interior.*] Yonder among the pots and pans goes Imagination, Idealism, the Divine Woman. [*Turning to the audience.*] O Electra, what gladness, what frolic! How full of life and of hope! And Science—how stark, dry, lonely, dead!

Electra. [*Bringing in a steaming dish.*] Here's something good.

Maximo. Let's see. What have you there? Rice with giblets!

Electra. You may praise it beforehand, because it really is very good. You shall see. [*Seats herself.*]

Maximo. A little angel has broken into my house to play cook!

Electra. Call me anything you like, Maximo, so you don't call me an angel.

Maximo. An angel of a cook! [*Both laugh.*]

Electra. No angel. [*Handing him a plate.*] Let me help you.

Maximo. Too much!

Electra. There is nothing else. I thought that in supplying this bodily need, one good thing is worth a lot of poor ones. [*Beginning to eat.*]

Maximo. Very true. Do you know why I laugh? If Evarista should drop in now and see us two eating, alone . . .

Electra. And if she knew the dinner was prepared by me . . . !

Maximo. Little girl, do you know, this rice is very good, very good indeed . . . ?

Electra. A Valencian lady in Hendaye was my teacher. She gave me a regular course in "rices." I know how to prepare at least seven varieties, each richer and more delicious than the rest.

Maximo. Come, little girl, you are a whole world in process of discovery.

Electra. And the Columbus?

Maximo. There is no Columbus. I say that you are a world that is discovering itself.

Electra. [*Laughing.*] Well, as I am a new world, and worth discovering, they will decide to make poor me a nun, to preserve me from dangers threatening my innocence!

Maximo. [*After tasting the wine, looks at the label.*] You certainly have not brought a bad wine.

Electra. In your fine cellar, which is a sort of library of the very best wines, I picked out the best Bordeaux, and a superior Sherry.

Maximo. Very good. The librarian isn't dull!

Electra. To be sure; I know what awaits me; solitude in a convent . . .

Maximo. I fear so. There's no escape.

Electra. [*Alarmed.*] What do you say?

Maximo. [*Correcting himself.*] I mean you will escape. I will save you myself.

Electra. You have promised to protect me.

Maximo. Yes, yes. That settles it.

Electra. And what do you plan to do? Tell me!

Maximo. We shall see. The thing is serious.

Electra. You talk with auntie . . . and then what next?

Maximo. Well, yes, I talk with your aunt.

Electra. And what will you say to her, sir?

Maximo. I will talk with your uncle.

Electra. [*Impatient.*] Good! Suppose you have done your talking with all the uncles in the wide world . . . What next?

Maximo. The method need not concern you. Rest assured I will take you under my protection, and when I have once secured your safety and honour, I shall proceed to the examination of and selection among the suitors. I want to talk with you now on this subject.

Electra. And scold me?

Maximo. No; you have already told me that playing with live dolls, call them suitors if you will, bores you.

Electra. A cure for boredom—but worse than the disease.

Maximo. Not one has stirred in you a feeling other than amusement at his expense?

Electra. Not one.

Maximo. All have declared their love for you in writing?

Electra. Some . . . by the language of the eyes, which we do not always know how to interpret. But I do not count them.

Maximo. You're wrong. We must include them all in our catalogue; those who attract with the pen, and those who win the affections with amorous glances. Here we confront the serious matter which requires my frank advice. Electra, you ought to marry and that soon.

Electra. [*Lowering her eyes abashed.*] Soon? For Heaven's sake, what hurry is there?

Maximo. Better to-day, than to-morrow. You need a man at your side, a husband. You have soul, temperament, instincts and virtues, —all assets in marriage. So far, so good. In the crowd of suitors I am obliged to choose one, the best; whose good qualities make him worthy of you. My greatest happiness will be, should my choice agree with your preference; because, in this matter, I want you to understand we shall totally fail, if we can't manage to make it a love-match.

Electra. [*With spontaneous enthusiasm.*] Oh, of course!

Maximo. A peaceful life, a good example to the world, a family, a happy home . . .

Electra. What bliss! But do I deserve all that?

Maximo. I believe you do. We shall soon see. [*They finish eating the rice.*]

Electra. Will you have some more?

Maximo. No, my daughter, I thank you. I have dined abundantly.

Electra. [*Putting the fruit dish on the table.*] As a dessert I offer you nothing but fruit. I know how much you like it.

Maximo. [*Picking up a fine apple.*] Yes, because that is Nature! The hand of man has done no more than pick it. It is the work of God.

Electra. Beautiful, splendid, without artifice.

Maximo. God creates these marvels for man to gather and live on. But not all have the good fortune to pass under the tree of life . . . [*Pares an apple.*[

Electra. Oh, yes, they do pass. But some go by absent-mindedly, their eyes glued to the ground; and so they don't see the beautiful fruit that cries "Pluck me, eat me." If just for one moment they would forget their tasks and lift their eyes up . . .

Maximo. [*Contemplating her.*] To lift one's eyes up . . . Oh, yes, I'm looking now—and I think I see.

[*Enter* MARIANO, *at the left.*]

Mariano. Señor.

Maximo. What do you want?

Mariano. It is bright red!

Electra. Ah! The fusion!

Maximo. When it begins to grow white, advise me.

Mariano. [*At the point of going.*] Very well, Sir.

Maximo. Wait a minute. Let them make ready the Bunsen battery in the factory. Before we generate light remember I want the big dynamo for an experiment.

Mariano. Very well, Sir. [*Out by the rear.*]

Electra. [*Sadly.*] Now you'll be preoccupied with the fusion, while . . .

Maximo. Oh, you—of course—will go home . . .

Electra. [*Sighing.*] Oh! I can't bear to think of what will happen when I enter the house.

Maximo. Mind me, wait and see!

Electra. Wait! Always wait! [*They finish eating.* ELECTRA *rises and clears away the dishes.*] Ah, me, if you don't look after this poor orphan, I think she's going to be very unhappy. . . . It is too bad, Señor, but Evarista and Pantoja are trying hard to make an "angel" of me, while I may as well confess I don't think that God called me to the angelic state!

Maximo. [*Who has risen and seems disposed to continue his labours.*] Never fear. Count on me. I shall soon claim you as your protector—as your guardian and teacher.

Electra. [*Approaching him in supplication.*] But don't put it off. For the sake of your children's health, Maximo, don't put it off a day. Listen to me. Why can't you have me as one of your children? Keep me with them just as if I were one of them?

Maximo. [*Seriously, and with affection.*] Do you know, that is an excellent idea? I must think it over. Let me think it over.

Workman. [*From the rear.*] The Marquis de Ronda.

Electra. [*Frightened.*] Oh, I must go!

Maximo. No, my daughter. Not if it is our friend, our best friend . . . You will see . . . [*To the* WORKMAN.] Show him in. [*The* WORKMAN *goes out.*]

Electra. Perhaps he will think . . .

Maximo. No. He will think nothing he shouldn't. Have you made some coffee?

Electra. I was just about to go and strain it . . . a very rich coffee . . . I know how to make coffee that's a dream.

Maximo. Bring it in. We'll invite the Marquis.

Electra. Good, good. Since you'll have it so. I'll go for the coffee. [*She goes out cheerfully, with a light step.*]

Maximo. Come in, Marquis.

[*Enter the* MARQUIS.]

Marquis. How is my good friend, the great scientist? [*Disconsolate, looking about him on all sides.*] Where's Electra?

Maximo. In the kitchen.

Marquis. In the kitchen!

Maximo. She will be back in a moment. We have lunched, and now we are having our coffee.

Marquis. Lunched! [*Glancing at the table.*]

Maximo. A dish of rice, fit for the gods and cooked by her.

Marquis. Bless her! [*Reproachfully.*] But my dear fellow, not to have invited me! I can never forgive you.

Maximo. But suppose it were done on the spur of the moment? And then, why didn't you come in sooner, when you were in my laboratory?

Marquis. True. . . . It is my fault.

Maximo. At least, we shall have coffee together. Pardon, my dear Marquis, for receiving you in these poor workman's quarters.

Marquis. As I said before, I can't understand why a rich man like you, with such sumptuous rooms upstairs . . .

Maximo. It's simple enough. Science and the habit of study condemn me to this den. I have to keep my children on the ground floor to have them near me, and so here I live like a hermit. . . .

Marquis. Forgetting that you are rich.

Maximo. Simple living is my wealth, temperance my luxury, work my recreation; and so long as I am alone, I must live as I do.

Marquis. You won't be alone much longer. The time has come for a decision. In a word, my dear friend, I come to warn you. [ELECTRA *enters with the coffee.*] Oh, what a charming goddess of the hearth!

Electra. [*Walking carefully, carrying the tray.*] For Heaven's sake, Marquis, don't find fault with me!

Marquis. I find fault with you?

Electra. And don't make me laugh, or you will work havoc. Have a care! [*The* MARQUIS *takes the tray from her hands.*]

Marquis. Here I am to forestall any possible catastrophe. [*Puts everything on the table.*] I have no cause to scold you, my daughter. In any other house such unconventional doings would alarm me. But where honourable toil dwells with true chivalry, there freedom cannot shock me.

Maximo. I thank you, Marquis. [*He serves the coffee.*]

Marquis. The people next door, however, do not share my views. A report of this incident has reached Santa Clara. Confusion and alarm of the García Yustes! The whole conclave convened in solemn session!

Electra. Heaven help me.

Marquis. My daughter, be calm.

Maximo. Leave us for a moment to ourselves.

Marquis. For my part, let me say, that whatever be the consequences of this little frolic, you can count on my uncompromising friendship.

Electra. [*Affectionately.*] Oh, Marquis, how kind you are!

Maximo. Kind?

Electra. And what have you to say about the coffee?

Marquis. It's good enough for Jupiter, the father of the gods. Never better on Olympus! A blessing on the hands that prepared it. Heaven grant me the consolation in my old age of often sharing the dessert, [*Very affectionately, touching the hands of both.*] with these same two friends to wait on me, and welcome me.

Electra. Oh, what a beautiful wish!

Marquis. I am going to take a liberty, my dear Maximo, as a token of regard and confidence. Do not take it amiss. My gray hairs authorize me . . .

Maximo. I guess your intention.

Marquis. From now on, let us drop formalities of speech, and call each other by our given names.

Maximo. I consider it an honour.

Electra. And may not I too have the honour?

Marquis. [*To* MAXIMO.] What do you think? In her case?

Maximo. By all means . . . on my responsibility.

Electra. [*Approving.*] Good, good.

Marquis. [*Well pleased.*] That is right, my friends. In return for your confidence, I disclose to you the fact, that the conclave is preparing to fulminate against you resolutions—of unheard-of severity.

Electra. For Heaven's sake, why?

Marquis. The family of García Yuste in the plenitude of their piety . . . God preserve them . . . have begun their balloon-ascent into the Infinite; and since they desire to rise, very, very high, they have thrown out all that ballast, called human logic. [MAXIMO *nods assent.*]

Electra. I don't understand. . . .

Marquis. Which ballast, that leaden thing called earthly logic, human logic, we gather up where they have dropped it.

Maximo. [*Laughing.*] Good! Excellent!

Electra. [*Applauding, without understanding it.*] Ballast, lead we gather up . . . human logic . . . excellent!

Marquis. Now that we are masters of this force, sacred logic, we must prepare to destroy the plans of the enemy. Our first conclusion: —[*To* ELECTRA.] you return to your home . . . Do not be alarmed. You'll not go alone.

Electra. Oh! I breathe again.

Marquis. We two professors of terrestrial logic will accompany you.

Electra. [*Pleased.*] Good Heaven, what fun! One to the right, the other to the left—under escort of a couple of policemen!

Maximo. [*To the* MARQUIS.] Don't you think we ought to go by day, so that everybody may see how insolently these criminals defy the broad light of the sun?

Marquis. Not so! I think we should go after dark, to show the world our righteousness need not fear the dark!

Maximo. Splendid idea! By night!

Mariano. [*Suddenly appearing at the left door.*] Sir, it is beginning to grow white!

Electra. [*With childish glee.*] The fusion! [*She says it with unconscious gladness.*]

Maximo. [*To* MARIANO.] I can't come now. Let me know when it reaches a dazzling whiteness. [MARIANO *goes out.*]

Marquis. [*Gravely, taking a glass.*] Dear friends, let me drink to the happy union, the perfect marriage of those blessed metals!

Maximo. [*With enthusiasm, raising his glass.*] I drink to our first metallurgist, the noble Marquis de Ronda.

Electra. [*With emotion, drinking.*] To our great and dear friend!

[PANTOJA *appears at the right, approaching through the garden. He remains in the doorway observing the scene with intense disgust.*]

Marquis. The enemy!

Electra. [*Terrified.*] Don Salvador! Heaven help me!

Maximo. Advance, Señor Pantoja. [PANTOJA *slowly comes forward.*] To what do I owe the honour . . . ?

Pantoja. Anticipating my good friends, Urbano and Evarista, who will soon have returned home, I am here, prepared to fulfil their duty and mine.

Maximo. Their duty? You?

Marquis. He comes to surprise us in his character of spy.

Maximo. In us, no doubt, he can see hardened criminals.

Pantoja. I see nothing. I want nothing, but Electra—for whom I have come; Electra, who ought not to be here, and who will now withdraw with me, and repent and bewail her error with me. [*Takes* ELECTRA'S *hand, who is helpless for terror.*] Come away with me.

Maximo. Pardon me. [*He goes up to* PANTOJA *calmly, yet stern.*] With all the respect I owe to you, Señor Pantoja, I beg you let go her hand! Before touching it, you should have asked my permission, who am master of this house, and responsible for all that goes on in it; for what you see . . . for what you would rather not see!

Pantoja. [*After hesitating a moment, releases the hand of* ELECTRA.] Well. For the moment I release the hand of the poor child who has been misguided or cajoled hither; and I say to you . . . with whom I wish to be very brief:—"I have come for Electra. Give me what is not yours and what shall never be yours."

Maximo. Electra is free: I have not brought her here against her will, and against her will you shall not take her hence.

Marquis. Show us, please, on what you found your authority.

Pantoja. I need not show you grounds for my authority. Why need I be at the pains to do so, if I am sure that she, the dear blind child . . . ought not to refuse me the obedience I demand? Electra, daughter of my soul, doesn't one word of mine, one look, suffice to draw you away from these men? to draw you to the arms of one who has centered on you the purest affection? who lives and means to live only for you? [ELECTRA *is silent, motionless, her eyes downcast.*]

Maximo. No. It won't suffice, that one word of yours!

Marquis. She doesn't seem convinced, my dear Sir.

Maximo. Let me ask you one question. Do you, Electra, my dear child, answer straightforwardly. Do heart and conscience single out from among all the men you know —here and elsewhere—this one man and worthy gentleman for dutiful obedience and love?

Marquis. Speak from your heart, daughter, and from your conscience.

Maximo. And if he commands you to go with him, and we bid you stay here, what will you choose to do, of your own free choice?

Electra. [*After a painful struggle.*] I shall remain here.

Marquis. You see?

Pantoja. She is under a spell . . . She has lost control over herself.

Maximo. Why insist further?

Marquis. Confess yourself beaten.

Pantoja. [*With cool tenacity.*] I do not consider myself beaten. Reason is always victorious in the end, and I would esteem myself unworthy of the charge God has given me to keep, were I not willing and able to protect her from her own errors and extravagances. No, I do not yield, Maximo. The metals that burn in your furnaces are less obdurate than I. Your powerful machines are flimsy toys by the side of *my* will. Electra is mine. It is enough that I say so.

Electra. [*Aside.*] I am afraid.

Maximo. If you want to make sure of the strength of your will, test it against mine.

Pantoja. I need not test it by yours or by any other living man's—but my doing my duty.

Maximo. Duty, too, is my strength.

Pantoja. Yes, a duty, of earthly origin—and with a carnal end. My duty derives from a conscience as immovable as the axis of the world, and my ends and aims are so high—you don't see them, and what is more, can never see them.

Maximo. Soar as high as you like, I will mount higher still to tell you, Sir, that I do not fear you, nor does Electra.

Pantoja. What an obstinate fellow!

Maximo. A sample of tough metal for your benefit!

Marquis. Electra will go back to her home with us . . .

Maximo. In my company, which will suffice for her aunt and uncle to overlook her piece of mischief.

Pantoja. They will not forgive or receive her the sooner because they see her enter in your company. They cannot change their sentiments, their immovable convictions. [*In exalted style.*] My mission in the world is to see that Electra be not lost, and lost she shall not be. Such is the Divine Will, of which mine is but the reflection, although it may seem to you mere caprice and tyranny, because you do not in the least understand the

great adventures of the spirit, poor, purblind, foolish men that you are!

Electra. [*In consternation.*] Don Salvador, by the Blessed Virgin, do not take offense. I am not wicked. Maximo is good . . . You know it . . . aunt and uncle know it . . . I should not have come here alone! Maximo and the Marquis will take me home, and aunt and uncle will forgive. [*To* MAXIMO *and the* MARQUIS.] Am I not right? Won't they forgive? [*To* PANTOJA.] Why do you hate Maximo, who has done you no harm? He hasn't, has he? What reason is there for your ill-will?

Maximo. It is not ill-will. It is ill-concealed and bitter hatred.

Pantoja. Hatred? No! My religion prohibits hatred. Between us, to be sure, on account of your crazy ideas, there exists a certain incompatibility. Moreover, your father, Lazaro Yuste and I . . . alas, were involved in a quarrel to which we would better not allude. But I do not hate you, Maximo. Rather I esteem you. [*Changing his austere and angry tone for another more suave and conciliatory.*] I drop the severity with which I spoke to you at first, and controlling my emotions . . . I beg that you allow Electra to leave your house with me.

Maximo. [*Inflexibly.*] I cannot accede to your request.

Pantoja. [*Still restraining himself.*] For the second time, Maximo, laying aside all resentment, and cherishing nothing but kindly feeling for you, I entreat you . . . permit her to come!

Maximo. That cannot be.

Pantoja. [*Swallowing his rage.*] Very well, very well. You have denied me the second time. . . . I have only two cheeks. If I had three to turn for a buffet from you—I should beg you the third time. [*With gravity and coolness, without any sign of yielding or pity.*] Adieu, Electra . . . Maximo, Marquis, adieu!

Electra. [*In a low voice to* MAXIMO.] For Heaven's sake, Maximo, give in a little.

Maximo. [*With determination.*] No!

Electra. Did you not say, you and the Marquis would accompany me? Let us all go together. [*This is heard by* PANTOJA *as he goes slowly toward the door and he waits.*]

Maximo. [*With still greater determination.*] He must go first. We shall go when it suits us, and with no one for escort.

Pantoja. [*Coldly, at the door.*] And why do you insist on going? To make the situation worse for the poor girl.

Maximo. I am going for reasons of my own.

Pantoja. May I know them?

Maximo. It is quite unnecessary that you should.

Pantoja. I have not attempted to make you reveal your intentions. Why should I since I know them? [*He walks several steps toward the center of the stage, fixing his gaze on* MAXIMO.] I do not trust the expression in your eyes. I pierce to the deepest recesses of your soul. There I read your thoughts. I only asked what was your intention—which I knew already—in order that I might hear the pretty protestations with which you would cloak them! In you, the truth has no place or part, none whatever. [*He goes out slowly, repeating the last words.*]

Electra. [*Terrified.*] He is gone. Do you think he will return?

Maximo. He is less a man than a mountain eager to fall upon us and crush us.

Marquis. But he won't fall! He is a harmless, imaginary mountain!

Electra. [*In consternation, drawing close to* MAXIMO *for protection.*] Protect me, Maximo. Inspire me with courage!

Maximo. Have no fear. Come to me. [*He takes her hands.*]

Marquis. It is dark by this time. We ought to go.

Electra. Let us go. . . . [*Doubtful and timid.*] But do you mean it? Will you go with me?

Maximo. We shall stand together in this matter . . . as in the rest of our life?

Electra. You and I together? [*The darkness increases.*]

Mariano. [*At the left door.*] It has reached the dazzling whiteness! It blazes.

Marquis. [*To* MARIANO.] The fusion is accomplished. Put out the furnace.

Maximo. [*With great effusiveness, kissing her hand.*] Bright soul, great heart, together for all time. . . . I shall tell our aunt and uncle that I claim you, make you mine! You are to be my comrade, the little mother of my children!

Electra. [*Overcome as though sheer joy disordered her mind.*] You mean it? I am to live with your children, be your eldest child? Your wife?

Maximo. [*In a loud voice.*] Yes, I mean it!

[*The room in the rear is lit up and the whole stage is full of light.*]

Marquis. Let us be going. It is night!

Electra. It is day! Eternal day for me! [MAXIMO *passes his arms about her waist and they go out, the* MARQUIS *following.*]

ACT FOUR

GARCIA YUSTE'S *garden. Right, the entrance to the palace with short stairway. Left, corresponding to the entrance, façade of grotesque architecture, decorated with bas-reliefs; along its base runs bench of carved stone. The terrace between building and graveled walks of garden has mosaic pavement. Urns and vases of exotic plants at intervals.*

In the middle distance, the garden, with great trees, and plots of flowers. From the center, three curved paths. That on the left leads to the street. Iron seats. Broad day.

ELECTRA *and* PATROS *discovered with a basket of flowers they have just picked.*

Electra. [*Pulling a letter out of her pocket.*] Leave me the flowers, and take the letter.

Patros. [*Leaves the flowers.*] This makes three to-day.

Electra. [*Picks out the small flowers, and makes of them three bouquets.*] Time isn't vast enough to hold the infinity of things Maximo and I have to say to each other.

Patros. Blesséd be God that gave the Señorita such happiness between sundown and break of day!

Electra. Last night he asked for my hand. Aunt and Uncle this afternoon are to set the date of our marriage.

Patros. And meanwhile letters hurry to and fro!

Electra. In this time of feverish anxiety, Maximo and I can't do without talking on paper at least. My letter of quarter past eight was full of serious matter; that of twenty-eight minutes past nine, reminded him to give Lolin his teaspoonful of syrup every two hours. The note you're now taking tells him that Aunt is gone to Mass and will be back later than usual! Of course, you know they'll have to talk things over.

Patros. H'm, yes . . . The Señora won't be back from Mass till eleven . . .

Electra. And at eleven I shall go with Uncle. [*Tying the three small bouquets.*] So, here they are. There is one for each, so that they won't be jealous and quarrel. . . . [*Arranging the large bouquet.*] Here's the bouquet for our Lady of Sorrows. Do go and be back quick to help me, but wait for the answer. Just two words of his will make me wild with joy.

Patros. I shall fly. [*Runs out by the rear.*]

Electra. [*Selecting the prettiest flowers for the bouquet.*] To-day, Holy Virgin, my offering will be larger than usual. It ought to be large enough to strip my uncle's garden of every flower. To-day I should like to place before your image all the dear things in Nature that are full of love: roses, stars, and hearts. Blesséd Virgin, our consolation and our hope, do not forsake me. Grant me my desire, which those eloquent divine eyes of thine did promise me, when in tears I told thee first of my anxieties, and then of my gratitude.

Patros. [*Hurrying swiftly from the rear.*] I bring no letter, but a little message that's worth more.

Electra. What? Is he coming?

Patros. Yes, and at once . . . when some gentlemen go who are now taking their leave. . . . He asks you to wait here, and you will talk with him a moment. He has to go to a committee meeting.

Electra. [*Glancing toward the rear.*] Is he coming? [*Hears steps.*] I think . . .

Electra. [*Handing her the bouquet.*] Take it. It is for the Blesséd Virgin.

Patros. Yes, yes.

Electra. [*Detaining her.*] But don't place it before the Virgin in the oratory. Be careful, Patros. Not in the oratory, but before my very own Virgin, the one over my bed! For Heaven's sake don't make a mistake.

Patros. No, of course not. I know. [*Runs into the house.*]

Maximo. [*At a distance, holding out his hands to her.*] My own little girl!

Electra. [*With the same gesture.*] My lord and master!

Maximo. We are shy, and don't quite know what to say.

Electra. Very shy! *You* must begin.

Maximo. Well, then, to relieve my embarrassment, tell me a great big lie . . . for instance, that you don't love me!

Electra. You tell me first a great truth.

Maximo. That I adore you?

Electra. False! Traitor! Take this rose that I picked for you. It is small and modest . . . as I would always like to be for you . . .

your very own little girl! [*Puts the flower in his buttonhole.*]

Maximo. [*Looking at her admiringly.*] What a heart! What a head!

Electra. Say more of the heart, and less of the head.

Maximo. I refuse to say less . . . of anything that's yours.

Electra. Do you know? I should like to be quite uncouth and common; quite untaught, and come to you in utter ignorance, so that you could teach me everything from the first rudiments. I want nothing that isn't yours, or from you.

Maximo. You have plenty of beautiful ideas and noble sentiments. God has generously endowed you, heaping on you precious things; and now he puts you into my hands, so that I, bungling workman though I be, may shape you, perfect you, polish you.

Electra. You are going to shine, my lord and master. I tell you that you shall shine!

Maximo. I am going to have a good wife—one of judgment, full of affection . . . she'll make me shine! [*Looks at his watch.*]

Electra. Don't let me detain you. Let's first think of our duties. Will you be gone long?

Maximo. I hope not . . . I'll be back by the time Evarista has returned from Mass.

Electra. And has our Marquis come, as he promised?

Maximo. I left him at home writing a letter to his attorney. What a matchless friend! I didn't tell you? Last night, when we returned home, I told him the whole story of your would-be protector, the story in two chapters. He is indignant . . . which turns out to our advantage, because we have won him completely to our side, and he will rally to our defence with great spirit and devotion.

Electra. [*Surprised.*] Do we yet need defence?

Maximo. In the main matter, clearly, no! But who will warrant us, that our friends and rivals won't vex us with petty difficulties and obstructive tactics?

Electra. [*More calmly.*] We should laugh at such trifles!

Maximo. Though we laugh . . . we should be on our guard. . . .

Marquis. [*In haste from the rear.*] Still here?

Maximo. Marquis, into your hands I commend my very soul.

Marquis. [*Scolding him affectionately.*] May you be as slow to return!

Maximo. I'm going at once, for a very short absence.

Electra. [*Watching him leave.*] Do hurry, and come back soon!

Marquis. Good for our scientific lover! And what an admirable discovery for you! Your girlish love needs to mate a widowed love; your exuberant imagination, a cool reason. At this man's side, my girl will become a great woman.

Electra. I'll grow into what he wants me to be! [*With great curiosity.*] Tell me, Marquis, did you know Maximo's poor wife? Don't be surprised at my curiosity. It is natural I should wish to know the past life of the man I love.

Marquis. I didn't know her. I saw her in Maximo's company, once . . . perhaps twice. She was a Basque, disagreeable, lacking in refinement and intelligence; a good wife, to be sure, after a fashion. But such a marriage could not have been the ideal of happiness.

Electra. But you didn't know Maximo's parents?

Marquis. I never knew his mother. She was French; a very estimable woman. My wife was her friend. I knew Lazaro Yuste, although not intimately, in Spain and France about the year '68: a very brilliant man, lucky in mining speculations, and very successful, so they say, with the ladies. A man, you know, with a history.

Electra. In that particular he wasn't like his son, who is steadiness itself!

Marquis. You may well say that. A brave and well-balanced husband has fallen to your lot: a giant's brain, a child's heart! To crown all, he has a fair fortune; besides what his father left him, the recent inheritance from his French uncles. What more could you wish? Ask for more, and God will say to you: "My child, there is no more to give you!"

Electra. [*Sighing.*] Ah! . . . And now tell me, my dear Marquis, can I rest at ease?

Marquis. Absolutely.

Electra. And I have nothing to fear from those two? You know that they think they have a right to exercise authority. . . .

Marquis. Perhaps they may make trouble for us, but we shall humble their pride.

Electra. Señor Cuesta?

Marquis. He's less to be feared than the

others. I talked with him to-day, and I hope he will maintain our cause with might and main.

Electra. And Señor Pantoja?

Marquis. He'll grumble, and give us just as much trouble as we let him. He'll blow the biblical trumpet to fill us with fear. But don't let us mind him.

Electra. You mean it?

Marquis. He can do nothing, absolutely nothing.

Electra. And if I meet him anywhere, I need not be afraid? . . .

Marquis. As afraid as you would be if a gadfly flew about you with his monotonous buzz.

Electra. Oh, what relief to my poor spirit! [*With affectionate enthusiasm.*] Marquis de Ronda, may God bless you!

Marquis. [*Much affected.*] My poor child! God will be with you.

[Don Urbano *comes from the house with his hat on.*]

Don Urbano. God save you, Marquis.

Marquis. May I have a word with you, my dear Urbano?

Don Urbano. Can't we wait till after Mass? [*To* Electra.] But, little girl, so placid and indifferent? The bell is ringing.

Electra. Half a minute, Uncle. [*Runs into the house.*]

Marquis. We shall set the date of the marriage, and your legal permission will be drawn up in good order.

Don Urbano. You would better arrange such matters with Evarista.

Marquis. But, my friend, the time has come for you to realize that certain interferences overthrow the authority vested in the head of the house.

Don Urbano. Dear Marquis, ask the whole planetary system to alter their orbits, and the stars to remove from one quarter of the heavens to another; but don't ask me to rise up against my wife's opinions!

Marquis. Yes, but not such absolute submission! . . . I insist that I must settle this matter personally with you, and not with Evarista.

Don Urbano. Come with us to Mass now and we will talk as we go.

Marquis. Well, well, I'll join you.

Electra. [*Entering, with hat, gloves, prayer-book.*] I'm ready now.

Don Urbano. Let us go. The Marquis accompanies us.

Evarista. [*From the rear at the left, followed by* Pantoja.] Make haste!

Pantoja. Indeed, if you want to be in time.

Evarista. Will you return, Marquis?

Marquis. Surely, without fail.

Evarista. Au revoir then.

[Electra, *the* Marquis, *and* Don Urbano *go out by the rear at the left.* Pantoja *strikes an attitude of great weariness and dismay, throwing himself on the bench in the foreground, at the left.*]

Evarista. Shall we enter the house?

Pantoja. No; let me breathe a while in the open air. I was choking in church. The heat, the crowd. . . .

Evarista. I'll have a cold drink brought you. Balbina!

Pantoja. No, I thank you.

Evarista. A cup of lime tea?

Pantoja. No, thank you.

[Balbina *enters from the house. The lady hands her the mantilla she has just taken off and her prayer-book, and dismisses her.*]

Evarista. There is no reason, my friend, for such absolute depression.

Pantoja. It isn't my pride, as they say, that is hurt; it is something subtler, far deeper. I am denied the consolation, the glory of directing this child, and of leading her in the paths of righteousness. And it pains me more than you, although you are so devoted to my ideas; you, in whom I so long thought I saw a faithful friend and a fervent ally, but who now abandon me in the critical hour!

Evarista. Your pardon, Don Salvador, I do not abandon you. We were agreed to keep, . . . I won't say confine, . . . this wild creature at San José de la Penitencia with a view to her discipline and if possible her vocation. Maximo's incredible caprice supervened, and I cannot, I say I cannot by any fair means refuse my consent. That would be madness. There are the facts. And against Maximo, what have you to say? As a man? As regards his character?

Pantoja. Nothing. [*Correcting himself.*] Well, I might say. . . . But meanwhile I confine myself to declaring that Electra is not prepared for matrimony, nor able yet to make a wise choice. I do not absolutely oppose marriage for her, provided she contract it

with a man whose character and whose ideas are not objectionable. But that question will come up for decision later. The immediate problem is: how to make this tender creature enter the sacred place of refuge where we shall be able to test her, to probe, with exquisite tact, her temperament, her tastes, her pleasures, and according to what we so learn, determine her career. [*Haughtily.*] What have you to say to that?

Evarista. [*Somewhat overawed.*] That so far as your plan goes, it is beautiful, I admit; but I cannot accord you my co-operation.

Pantoja. [*Arrogantly walking back and forth.*] So then, my dear Doña Evarista, your position amounts to this: if the child wants to wreck herself, wrecked she shall be—lost; if she prefers to be damned, well, damned she shall be, and the sooner the better!

Evarista. [*Catching the suggestion, in great trepidation.*] Electra wrecked, lost? But how can we prevent it? . . . Is it in my power to save her?

Pantoja. [*With fervor.*] It is.

Evarista. Oh, no! . . . I lack the courage to interfere. And then too, with what right? Impossible, Don Salvador, impossible!

Pantoja. [*Feeling more sure of himself.*] You are aware, my friend, that the act of separating Electra from a world in which innumerable evils surround and threaten her is not despotism: it is love, the purest expression of paternal affection, which sometimes afflicts while it chastens. Do you doubt that the great purpose of my life to-day is that dear child's best good?

Evarista. I do not doubt it, I cannot doubt it.

Pantoja. [*Grandiloquently.*] I love Electra with so intense a love that all the subtlest human speech won't suffice to declare my devotion. Ever since I saw her, the call of the blood grew loud within me, crying out that this child was mine! I want to have her; and I ought to keep her under my sacred, paternal care and government. Oh, to make her love me as angels love . . .! To have her be my reflection in behaviour, my image in ideas! Oh, to have her acknowledge the obligation to suffer for those who gave her life; and to sanctify herself, that she may aid us,—who were wicked—to obtain divine pardon . . .! In God's name, can't you understand this?

Evarista. [*Overwhelmed.*] I do, I do. And I am full of admiration for your mighty spirit.

Pantoja. Ah, for less admiration, and more help from you!

Evarista. I cannot help you! [*Seats herself, weeping and dejected.*]

Pantoja. Of course, Electra cannot arouse in you the great interest which she inspires in me. [*Trying tones of gentle persuasion.*] Should her renunciation of worldly pleasures cause the girl grief for a while, yet she will not be long in finding peace and a blessed calm. . . . I shall settle ample means on her. All that I have shall be hers,—for the glory of her convent. Then Electra will be appointed Sister Superior, and shall govern the congregation under my authority. [*With profound emotion.*] Good God, how happy will not she be! And I too—how happy! [*He remains for a while rapt as in ecstasy.*]

Evarista. Of course, I understand, that by refusing to do what you ask of me, I prevent this child from attaining the most beatific state conceivable here below. You well know my sentiments. How gladly would I not exchange my life of wealth and luxury for the sacred glory of directing a religious house in toil and humility! . . . I always admired you for your protection of La Penitencia. I admired you more when I knew that you doubled your subvention after my poor Eleuteria, full of sorrow for her sin, like a poor Magdalene, entered the institution in quest of peace and pardon. In what you did, I saw the fruit of the purest spirituality.

Pantoja. You are right; for when your unhappy cousin entered that house, the protection I extended it was not only more practical, but more spiritual. Eleuteria after her conversion, was seen by no one, not even by myself. Still, I went daily to the church, and conversed in spirit with the penitent, considering her as truly regenerate as myself. The unfortunate woman died in her forty-fifth year. I obtained permission for her burial within the walls; and then I increased my protection of the congregation, making it entirely my own, because within its wall reposed the remains of her I loved.

Evarista. And now, the man who may well be called its founder, visits every single day, without missing one, the holy house itself, and the humble cemetery where lie the departed Sisters. . . .

Pantoja. [*With quick interest.*] How did you come to know of this?

Evarista. I know it. You walk about the

yard among its beds of flowers, and rest in the shade of cypresses and oleanders. . . .

Pantoja. True. But how did you know it? . . .

Evarista. The founder walks there and roams about, praying for himself, and for the poor sinner; interceding for her repose and his own.

Pantoja. Ay, true; for there too will rest my remains. [*With great passion.*] And further, I pray that as my spirit never departs from that house, so the spirit of Electra also may dwell in it—for the necessary time at least to prove her. I will not force her to cloistral seclusion; but if, after she has tried it, she should take a liking to so beautiful a career, and desire to persevere in it, I shall consider that God has conferred upon me the most ineffable of favours! Oh, what a lovely end! What greatness, what bliss!

Evarista. [*With deep emotion.*] A greatness, ay, beyond compare!

Pantoja. Do you still doubt that my purposes are noble, and that no wild passion actuates me?

Evarista. How can I doubt you?

Pantoja. Well then, if my plan seems fair to you, why do you not come to my assistance?

Evarista. Because I have not the power.

Pantoja. Not even if I assure that the girl's seclusion will be in the nature only of a test of her spirit?

Evarista. Not even in that case. No, Don Salvador, you must not count on me. [*Struggling with her conscience.*] I realize the loftiness, the beauty of your ideas. I sympathize with them. I am conscious of echoes and reverberations of these ideas of yours in my own soul. But I also owe something to society; and in social and family life what you ask of me is impossible.

Pantoja. [*Dissembling his anger.*] So be it. Patience. [*He walks about, petulant and gloomy.*]

Evarista. [*After a pause.*] What do you mean to do? You renounce your determination?

Pantoja. [*With firmness.*] No, Señora.

Evarista. How can I help you?

Pantoja. I do not know. But I shan't fail to hit upon a plan. [*Quickly deciding.*] Evarista, do me the favour, pray, to write to the Mother Superior of La Penitencia.

Evarista. And what shall I tell her?

Pantoja. Have her come immediately with two Sisters.

Evarista. Why don't you write yourself?

Pantoja. Because I must attend to something else.

Evarista. And the letter must go?

Pantoja. At once.

Evarista. Good. [*Turns to go to the house.*]

Pantoja. Mind you, without a minute's delay.

Evarista. [*Looking into the garden.*] It seems to me they are returning.

Pantoja. Be quick, about it, my dear friend.

Evarista. I'm going. May God inspire us all. [*Enters the house.*]

Pantoja. I shall be with you shortly. [*Aside.*] They must not see me. [*He hides himself behind the stone work at the right, near the steps.*]

[ELECTRA, DON URBANO *and the* MARQUIS *return from Mass, and* PATROS *comes out of the house.*]

Electra. [*Advancing, stops* PATROS *at the bottom of the stairs.*] Has he come?

Patros. No, Señorita.

[*A distant song is heard of children playing ring-around-the-rosies.**]

Electra. I'm dying with impatience. [*She takes off her hat and gloves, and gives them with her prayer-book to* PATROS.] I shall wait, and play ring-around-the-rosies with the children. First I must pick a few flowers. [*She picks flowers in the bed at the left.*]

Patros. Within doors, Señor.

Don Urbano. [*To* PATROS.] The Señora is . . .?

Marquis. Let us join her.

Don Urbano. After you, Marquis.

[*They enter the house, followed by* PATROS.]

Electra. [*Admiring the flowers she has picked.*] How fragrant! And this clematis, how lovely! [PANTOJA *comes out of hiding; she is frightened at seeing him.*] Oh!

Pantoja. My daughter, are you afraid of me?

Electra. I am afraid. I can't help it. I oughtn't to be; no, no. I beg you to excuse me, Don Salvador. I am going to play ring-around-the-rosies.

Pantoja. Wait an instant. You are going there to catch the children's high spirits?

Electra. No, Señor, I am going to infect

*Equivalent suggested for "Guganto al corro."

them with mine, because I have more than enough to spare for them!

[*The singing of the children dies away.*]

Pantoja. I know already the cause of your great joy.

Electra. If you know it, there's nothing more then to say. Good-bye, Don Salvador.

Pantoja. [*Detaining her.*] Ungrateful girl, grant me one moment.

Electra. A moment only?

Pantoja. No more.

Electra. Very well. [*Seats herself on the stone bench. Puts flowers by her side, and taking some of them fastens them in her hair.*]

Pantoja. I do not understand why you are so reserved with me, when you know that I am so much interested in you and in your happiness.

Electra. [*Without looking at him, intent on putting the flowers in her hair.*] If my happiness interests you, share it then! I am very happy.

Pantoja. Happy to-day; and what of to-morrow?

Electra. To-morrow more than ever. . . . More and more, forever and aye.

Pantoja. True, abiding and immutable joy does not exist—save in eternal love; a devotion above human restlessness and misery.

Electra. [*Her hair now decked, she sticks flowers in her dress and waist.*] Must we go over the same old story of how I ought to be an angel? I am very earthly, Don Salvador. God made me a woman. He didn't put me in his heaven, but on our earth.

Pantoja. There are angels on earth also: angels who in the midst of the material turmoil live already the life of pure spirits.

Electra. [*Displaying her collar and waist decked with little flowers. The singing of the children is heard more clearly.*] How about me? Do I look like an angel?

Pantoja. You always *seem* one. And I pray that you *be* one also.

Electra. I deck myself like this to amuse the children. If you could see how they laugh! [*With a sudden sad thought.*] Do you know what I look like now? A dead child! Children are decked like this when they are carried to the grave.

Pantoja. To symbolize the beautiful thought of Heaven, whither they are bound.

Electra. [*Tearing off the flowers.*] No, I won't look like a dead child. I might fancy you were carrying me to my grave.

Pantoja. I would not bury you now. I only wish to surround you with light. [*The children's song grows fainter, and ceases.*]

Electra. Lights are also put about dead children.

Pantoja. I do not want your death, but your life: not a restless and common life, to be sure, but a sweet one; free, lofty, loving, full of an eternal and celestially pure love.

Electra. [*Confused.*] And why do you want all that for me?

Pantoja. Because I love you with a love nobler than all human loves. I shall better make you understand the depth of this affection, by saying that to save you a little pain I would gladly endure the most terrible agonies you can imagine.

Electra. [*Astonished, without quite understanding.*] That is self-sacrifice!

Pantoja. Consider how much I suffer this minute because I cannot save you a little grief, a trifling sorrow. . . .

Electra. Me?

Pantoja. Yes, you.

Electra. A little grief . . .?

Pantoja. A sorrow that afflicts me the more because I must be the one who seems to cause it.

Electra. [*Rebelling, arises.*] Griefs! Sorrows! No, no, I won't have them. Keep them yourself. You need bring me nothing but joys!

Pantoja. [*With pity.*] I wish I might; but it cannot be.

Electra. Oh! you terrify me. [*With a sudden thought which calms her.*] Ah! Now I understand! Poor Don Salvador! You're about to tell me something bad about Maximo; bad in your opinion, not in mine. Do not trouble yourself. I couldn't believe anything evil of him. [*Speaking hurriedly, and not giving* PANTOJA *a chance to interrupt.*] Maximo is the best man in the world, the very best; and anybody who dares say a word against this truth . . . I hate him!

Pantoja. For Heaven's sake, let me speak. Do not be so hasty. My daughter, I speak evil of nobody, not even of those who hate me. Maximo is good, industrious, very brilliant. What more do you wish?

Electra. [*Delighted.*] You are right! You are right!

Pantoja. I will even say more. I will say that you may love him, that you ought to love him.

Electra. [*With great satisfaction.*] Ah!

Pantoja. And love him dearly. . . . [*He pauses.*] He is not to blame, no.

Electra. To blame! [*Alarmed again.*] Come, I wager you are going to tell me some escapade of his.

Pantoja. Not of his.

Electra. Whose then? [*Remembering.*] Ah! To be sure, I remember, Maximo's father and you were bitter enemies. They also tell me that the good gentleman—though the soul of honour, in business,—was a little wild . . . you know, you understand me. . . . But this doesn't in the least affect *us!*

Pantoja. Innocent creature, you don't know what you are saying!

Electra. I say that . . . that excellent—

Pantoja. Lazaro Yuste, yes. . . . When I speak his name I cannot but associate it with the memory of one who lives no more, one very dear to you. . . .

Electra. [*Understanding, yet wishing not to understand.*] To me!

Pantoja. One who lives no more, but very dear to you. [*He pauses. They look at one another.*]

Electra. [*With terror in a scarcely audible voice.*] My mother! [PANTOJA *nods.*] My mother! [*Stupefied, craving and yet dreading the explanation.*]

Pantoja. The day of pardon has come. Let us forgive.

Electra. [*Indignant.*] My mother, my poor mother! They never mention her, except to do her dishonour. [*Furious.*] I wish I had them in my hands to crush them, to tear them all to shreds—so!

Pantoja. Unhappy me! I should not, ought not to have spoken to you about this. I would give the rest of my days if I could suppress and conceal it. Now you know it was impossible. My love compelled me to speak!

Electra. [*In torment.*] And I must hear?

Pantoja. I have said that Lazaro Yuste was . . .

Electra. [*Covering her ears.*] I won't, I will not hear it.

Pantoja. Your mother was then your present age, eighteen. . . .

Electra. [*Angry, rebellious.*] I don't believe it. . . . I believe nothing.

Pantoja. She was a charming girl. . . .

Electra. [*Resisting with greater energy.*] Hush! I believe nothing, nothing! I don't believe you.

Pantoja. [*Grieved.*] Daughter of my very soul, turn your eyes Godward!

Electra. [*Disturbed.*] I am dreaming. . . . All I see is a lie, an illusion. [*Looking hither and thither with frightened eyes.*] Those trees are a lie, that house . . . that sky . . . *You* are a lie! . . . you are not real! . . . a monster in a nightmare . . . [*Striking her head.*] Awake, unhappy girl, awake!

Pantoja. [*Attempting to calm her.*] Electra, dear child, innocent, sweet soul!

Electra. [*With a scream, as from the depths of her being.*] Mother, my mother . . . ! the truth, tell me the truth. . . . [*Beside herself, she runs about the stage.*] Where are you, O mother? . . . I want death, or the truth! O mother, come to me! Mother, mother! [*She goes out by the rear, half-crazed, and disappears in the grove at the rear. The song of the children playing ring-around-the-rosie is heard nearby.*]

[DON URBANO *and the* MARQUIS *come from the house in haste. Behind them,* BALBINA *and* PATROS.]

Don Urbano. What has happened?

Marquis. We heard Electra scream.

Balbina. She went out running through the garden.

Patros. This way. [*Both, alarmed, run into the garden.*]

Marquis. [*Looking toward the grove.*] There she goes. . . . She is still running . . . still crying. . . . Oh, my dear child! [*Runs to the garden.*]

Don Urbano. What does this mean?

Pantoja. I will explain later. . . . Wait. Let's arrange now. . .

Don Urbano. What?

Pantoja. [*Trying to collect his thoughts.*] Let me think. . . . We ought to bring her into the house. . . . Go and . . .

Don Urbano. [*Looking toward the garden.*] Maximo is coming!

Pantoja. [*Vexed.*] Most inopportune!

Don Urbano. The children run to him. Maximo turns to follow. Electra flees from him. The Marquis and my nephew engage in excited talk.

Pantoja. Go and . . . see that Maximo doesn't interfere. . . . [*Eager to go himself, but not daring to.*]

Balbina. [*Returning in haste from the garden.*] Poor child. . . . Crying for her mother.

. . . She is seated at the mouth of the grotto surrounded by the children . . . and nobody can move her from there.

Pantoja. And Maximo . . .?

Balbina. At a loss, like the rest of us, who don't understand. . . . I am going to inform the Señora.

Pantoja. No, no. Have the Mother Superior and the Sisters come?

Balbina. They are here.

Pantoja. Don't say anything to the Señora. Go into the house and await my orders.

Balbina. Very well, Senor.

Pantoja. [*Irresolutely, almost alarmed.*] For the first time in my life I can not reach a decision. I will go. [*At the rear of the garden.*] No. . . . Shall I wait? No. . . . [*At last with decision.*] I go! [*A few steps further* MAXIMO *detains him, coming from the garden, very much agitated and angry.*]

Maximo. [*His anger in tone and gesture continues throughout the scene.*] Stop! The Marquis informs me it's from here, and after a long conversation with you, that Electra rushed out in this terrible frenzy.

Pantoja. [*Disturbed.*] Here . . . true . . . we were talking . . . and the girl . . .

Maximo. Was bitten by a monster!

Pantoja. Perhaps so. But I'm not the monster. It's a terrible monster nourished by human deeds, and called History. [*Trying to withdraw.*] Adieu.

Maximo. [*Grasps him tightly by the arm.*] Be still! You are going to repeat to me at once what this monster History told Electra, to put her in such a frightful state of mind.

Pantoja. [*Not knowing what to say.*] I . . . first . . . let us agree before we begin that . . .

Maximo. I want no preambles! I want the real, precise, definite truth. You have shocked Electra, you have shaken her reason. With what words, with what thoughts? I must know at once. It concerns the woman who is the whole world to me.

Pantoja. She is more than that to me: she is Heaven!

Maximo. Let me know instantly the plot you have woven against this poor orphan, against me, against the two of us, whose souls have fused and become one single soul! Tell me what poison you have poured into the ear of her I can and ought to call my wife. [PANTOJA *makes obscure signs.*] What do you say? That she shall not be my wife? You mock me?

Pantoja. I have said nothing.

Maximo. [*Breaking out in anger, he attacks him with great violence.*] Well, for your silence, your mockery, that unctuous mask of selfishness that has no match on earth—for that virtue, real or sham—I know not, which in the dark and unawares flings destruction upon us . . . [*He grasps* PANTOJA *by the throat and throws him on the bank.*] for that perfidious, venomous suavity, may eternal damnation take you, whether you be high or low, eagle or snake!

Pantoja. [*Recovering his breath.*] Brute! Shameless fool!

Maximo. That I am, indeed! You drive us all mad. [*Recovering from his wrath.*] None other has had the diabolical power to rob me of my self-control, and make my anger burst all bounds like this. In unthinking fury I have attacked a weak and wretched being, incapable of self-defence!

Pantoja. [*Sitting up.*] Oh, I can defend myself. [*Regaining his composure, he speaks sententiously.*] Your strength is physical; mine is spiritual. [MAXIMO *looks at him in amazement and bewilderment.*] I am stronger than you, infinitely stronger. Do you doubt it?

Maximo. You stronger than I?

Pantoja. Anger chokes you, pride blinds you. Abused and mocked, I recover my poise. You don't. You tremble, Maximo; you, who are brute strength, you tremble!

Maximo. My wrath still shakes me. Don't you provoke it!

Pantoja. [*With growing self-control.*] I neither provoke it, nor do I dread it. You do me violence, and I forgive you.

Maximo. *You* forgive *me?* Me! You are trying to make a murderer of me, and you may yet succeed.

Pantoja. [*Serene and cool, gravely and without boasting.*] Let your passion mount; cry aloud; strike me! Here I stand unmoved. No human force will bend me; no human power turn me aside from my path. Beat me, wound me, kill me. I won't defend myself. Martyrdom has no terrors for me. Your brutal rage may destroy this poor body. It is worthless. But what is here [*raising his eyes, his hand over his heart*], who shall destroy *that?* My God-given spirit, nothing can move. And if death quenches my will, the thought, the cause I champion will always survive and triumph.

Maximo. I do not recognize, I cannot admit, great thoughts in a man who is himself without greatness; who has no pity, no tenderness, no compassion.

Pantoja. My purposes are exalted, and I move on to their fulfilment by all means possible.

Maximo. [*Terrified.*]. By all possible means? There is but one avenue of approach to God; through goodness. [*With exaltation.*] Oh, God! Thou canst not permit us to win to Thy Kingdom by ways of darkness; nor to reach thy glory by trampling over hearts that love Thee! Never, O God, wilt thou permit this, never! Ere we shall behold such perversion of justice, all Nature shall suffer wrack and ruin, and the universal order dissolve in chaos!

Pantoja. Blasphemer, your words are an offence to God!

Maximo. You offend him worse by your deeds.

Pantoja. Enough. I ought not to argue with you. I have nothing more to say to *you.*

Maximo. Nothing more? When you have said nothing! [*Grasps him vigorously by the arm.*] You shall go with me and find Electra, and you shall confront her; and either you shall clear up my doubts and relieve me of this terrible anxiety, or I swear, by the memory of my mother, you shall perish and I shall perish. We all shall perish!

Pantoja. [*After looking him over narrowly.*] Let us go. [*As they move away,* EVARISTA *comes out; behind her, the* SUPERIOR *with two* SISTERS *of La Penitencia.*]

Evarista. What is the matter, Maximo? I have heard your voice raised in anger.

Maximo. This wretch! Come here, come here, Aunt. [*The* SUPERIOR *and* SISTERS *appear.* MAXIMO *is alarmed at seeing them.*] Oh! . . . Those women! . . . [PATROS *enters from the garden in haste.*]

Patros. Señora, the young lady has lost her reason. She runs whimpering in distress. She shuns us, rushes about, calling on her mother. She will neither listen to us, nor notice us who have tried to comfort her.

Evarista. [*Going toward the garden.*] My own dear child!

Maximo. [*Gazing at the garden.*] Here she comes! [*Lets* PANTOJA *go, and runs into the garden.*]

Patros. Master and the Marquis have got her under control, and are bringing her to the house.

[ELECTRA *appears, led by* DON URBANO *and the* MARQUIS; MAXIMO *is with them. When she sees the persons on the stage, she shrinks back. Gently and affectionately they urge her forward. Her hair and breast are decked with flowers.*]

Evarista. My daughter, what madness is this?

Maximo. [*Hastening to her affectionately.*] Beloved, listen to me. My love shall supply for you the place of reason.

Electra. [*Draws away from* MAXIMO, *expressing shame in face and gesture. Then she grows calmer. Her mental disturbance is not shown by screams or hysterical laughter, but by her tones of resigned sorrow and melancholy.*] Do not approach me. I am not yours, no, and never can be!

Maximo. Why do you shun me? Whither will you go without me . . .?

Pantoja. [*Who has passed to the right near* EVARISTA.] To the truth, to eternal peace!

Electra. In quest of my mother. Can you tell me where my mother is? I saw her in the ring of children . . . near the sensitive plant at the entrance to the grotto. I followed her, but could not overtake her. She turned, looked at me, and fled.

[*The song of the children at play is heard.*]

Marquis. Don't you see Maximo? Your future husband? . . .

Maximo. [*With lively emotion.*] Nobody shall oppose us. There is no reason or force in nature, Electra, my life, that can prevent our marriage.

Electra. [*Imposing silence.*] No more husbands or wives! My soul chokes with sorrow! Only fathers and brothers, scores of brothers . . .! How vast the world, how lonely, how desolate! A few black clouds float over it—my former illusions. They are not mine now—they are nobody's. Desolation! All is darkness and tears. The end of the world is at hand, the end of the world! [*With a sudden attack of panic fear.*] Let me flee, and hide. I don't want fathers, I don't want brothers. I want to go to my mother. Where is her grave? Yes, to the grave! Both of us together, mother and I! And I'll tell her all

my sorrows, and she will tell me the truth at last. The truth! . . . the truth!

Pantoja. [*Aside to* EVARISTA.] Now is our opportunity; let us seize it.

Evarista. My daughter, we shall conduct you to a home of peace and rest.

Maximo. It isn't peace. Rest and reason are with *us*. Electra is mine. [EVARISTA *is about to draw her out with her.*] I claim her.

Electra. Farewell, Maximo. I am not yours. I belong to my sorrow. My mother calls me to her side. [*Anxious, displaying a rapt attention.*] Ha! I hear her voice. . . .

Maximo. Her voice?

Electra. Hush! She calls me, she calls me. [*In an ecstasy of joy.*]

Evarista. Daughter, you are beside yourself!

Electra. Do you hear? I am coming, mother mine! [*She runs toward the* SISTERS.] Let us go. [*To* MAXIMO *who is about to follow them.*] I must go alone. She only calls me, not you. Only me! Can't you hear the voice that calls "Electra"? I am coming to you, mother dear. [*The* SISTERS, EVARISTA *and* PANTOJA *surround her.*]

Maximo. Iniquity! To win her from me, they have gone to the length of robbing her of her senses! [*He tries to free himself from the arms of the* MARQUIS *and* DON URBANO.]

Marquis. Don't *you*, too, lose your senses! [*Restraining him.*]

Don Urbano. Control yourself!

Marquis. Let her go now. We'll get her back.

Maximo. Ah! Back, back to truth, to reason, to science! This world of changes and chances, lies and deceits, is not *my* world!

ACT FIVE

Parlor at the nunnery of San José de la Penitencia. Side doors; at the rear, a window that looks into the court.

SCENE ONE

Evarista. [*Entering with the nun.*] Don Salvador . . .?

Sister Dorothy. He arrived a short time ago; he is in the office with the Mother Superior and our Sister Treasurer.

Evarista. Urbano will find him there. While they are talking, tell me, Sister Dorothy, all about the girl, her acts, words, thoughts. Your decision has been most fortunate; to be with her constantly, and to make yourself her friend, her confidante in this solitude.

Sister Dorothy. Electra honors me with her affection, and I do something in return to calm her afflicted soul.

Evarista. [*Pointing to her forehead.*] And how are her . . .?

Sister Dorothy. Her wits? All right, Señora. Her mind is as clear as ever. By this she would be none the worse for her attack if she did not cherish the settled hope of seeing her mother, and of talking to her; if she didn't expect her to enlighten her ignorance and solve her doubts. All the spare moments she can steal from her religious duties, she spends abstracted, roaming in the grounds—in the cemetery and in the adjoining garden. There, too, as within doors, she is rapt in thoughts of her mother.

Evarista. Tell me more. She remembers Maximo? Does she think of him?

Sister Dorothy. Yes, Señora. But in prayer and meditation alike she strives to think of him and to love him only as a brother, no more, and now at last, she hopes to succeed in controlling mind and heart.

Evarista. Ah, yes; her mind, perhaps! But will her heart obey her will? Everything might perhaps work out as your good plan would have it, if yesterday's misfortune had not utterly changed the situation.

Sister Dorothy. Misfortune!

Evarista. Our good friend, the broker, Don Leonardo Cuesta, died.

Sister Dorothy. I did not know that.

Evarista. The poor man! A few days ago he was taken ill. He felt his end near. He went out early on Monday and dropped unconscious in the street. They took him to his house, where he passed away at three o'clock that very afternoon.

Sister Dorothy. Poor gentleman!

Evarista. Leonardo's will makes Electra heiress to half his estate.

Sister Dorothy. Ah!

Evarista. But with the express condition that the girl shall not become a nun. Do you know if Don Salvador has been notified?

Sister Dorothy. I suppose so, for he knows everything, and he guesses what he doesn't know.

Evarista. True.

Sister Dorothy. [*Seeing* DON URBANO *coming.*] Don Urbano.

[DON URBANO *enters.*]

Evarista. Have you seen him?

Don Urbano. Yes, I left him at work in the office. What devicefulness, what mental concentration, what a brain!

Evarista. Has he been apprised of the terms of poor Cuesta's last will and testament?

Don Urbano. He has.

Evarista. Does he seem vexed?

Don Urbano. If he is, you wouldn't know it. His strength of will is such that when most affected, his countenance doesn't betray his emotions—such is his great spirit!

Evarista. [*Enthusiastically, interrupting him.*] Indeed, he masters every human weakness, and like an eagle, soars higher and higher above every storm of earthly passion.

Don Urbano. When I asked him whether he hopes to retain control of Electra, he answered merely, with no ostentation but a simple serenity: "I put my trust in God."

Evarista. What grandeur of character! And is he aware that the Marquis and Maximo are appointed executors?

Don Urbano. Ay, and more. At noon, he received a letter from them announcing their official visit this very afternoon, accompanied by a lawyer to ask the girl formally whether she accepts or refuses the inheritance.

Evarista. And in the face of this threat . . .?

Don Urbano. Oh, nothing. He is calm and serene, and repeats the terse and expressive formula: "I put my trust in God."

[MAXIMO *and the* MARQUIS *enter at the left.*]

Marquis. Let us wait here for him.

Maximo. [*Seeing* EVARISTA.] Ah, who's here? My dear Aunt! [*Saluting her affectionately.*]

Evarista. [*Answering* MAXIMO'S *greeting.*] Ah! Marquis. . . . And what do you rely on in the last resort for victory in this tug of war?

Marquis. I can't say. We are fighting against a cunning dragon.

Evarista. And you, Maximo, what is your plan?

Maximo. The monster is subtle, and a consummate master of tactics—in such warfare. Nevertheless, I put my trust in God.

Evarista. You also?

Maximo. Of course! Whoever worships the truth, puts his trust in God. We contend for the truth. Why should we fear that God will abandon us? He cannot, my dear Aunt!

Don Urbano. When you passed through the halls—did you see Electra?

Maximo. No.

Sister Dorothy. [*Appearing at the window.*] She is passing this very moment. She comes from the cemetery.

Maximo. [*Running to the window with* DON URBANO.] Oh, how sad, how beautiful! The whiteness of her habit makes her look like an apparition. [*Calling her.*] Electra!

Don Urbano. Hush.

Maximo. I cannot help it. [*Looks again.*] Ha, is she alive? Is it really she, the beautiful, the real Electra? or her beatified spirit? She turns. . . . She lifts her eyes to Heaven. . . . Were I to see her vanish in the air like a wraith, it would not surprise me. She drops her eyes . . . she pauses. . . . What can she be thinking of? [*Continues to watch* ELECTRA.]

Marquis. [*Who has remained at the front of the stage with* EVARISTA.] Yes, Señor; as false as false can be!

Evarista. Be careful of what you say.

Marquis. Either our honourable Don Salvador is misinformed, or he has knowingly inferred . . . well, the very opposite of the truth, moved by reasons and purposes beyond our common intelligence to grasp.

Evarista. That cannot be, Marquis. So righteous a man, of so spotless a conscience, and with such lofty ideals—he to . . . deny the truth—speak a lie?

Marquis. My dear lady, who will certify that in the depths of so exalted a conscience—there may not lurk . . . another moral law, whose subtleties elude our vulgar understanding? As in Nature, we see countless phenomena whose causes are not what they seem, so there are mysteries in the life of the Spirit.

Evarista. Ah, no, no, it cannot be. You must be mistaken. There are cases, of course, where a lie makes plain the path of righteousness. But is this such a case? I cannot believe it.

Marquis. That you may get a complete view of the matter, listen to what I tell you. Virginia assures me that Josefina Perret, without any room for doubt or deception, was the mother of that man; and she can furnish absolute unquestionable proofs. . . . Furthermore, I can prove that Lazaro Yuste was not in Madrid between '63 and '66.

Evarista. My head swims with all this, Marquis.

Marquis. [*Seeing* PANTOJA *appear at the right.*] Here he comes.

Maximo. [*Returning to the front of stage.*] We confront the monster.

Sister Dorothy. With your leave, gentlemen, I will retire. [*She goes out by the left.* PANTOJA *remains a moment in the doorway.*]

Pantoja. [*Advancing slowly.*] Gentlemen, pardon me if I have kept you waiting.

Maximo. Since Señor Pantoja has been informed of our purpose in coming to La Penitencia, we need not state it.

Marquis. [*Graciously.*] We shall refrain from repeating it; lest we should unnecessarily wound your sensibilities, as you would then have to give up the battle for lost.

Pantoja. [*Serene, without ostentation.*] I am never beaten.

Maximo. That is saying a great deal.

Pantoja. And I assure you Electra has learned to despise all earthly possessions, and will reject the inheritance.

Maximo. [*Restraining his anger.*] Oh!

Evarista. You see; this man doesn't surrender!

Pantoja. I never surrender . . . never!

Maximo. So I see. [*Losing control of himself.*] I shall yet have to kill you.

Pantoja. I am prepared to die.

Marquis. We shall not have to resort to such extreme measures.

Pantoja. Resort to what you will, you shall always find me planted firmly at my post.

Marquis. We put our trust in the law.

Pantoja. I put my trust in God.

Maximo. The Law is God . . . or ought to be.

Pantoja. Oh! gentlemen of the Law, I assure you that Electra, having easily adjusted herself to this life of purity, has fallen in love with prayer, with the sweet peace of religion, and does not in the least, desire to leave this holy house.

Maximo. [*Impatiently.*] May we see her?

Pantoja. Not just at present.

Maximo. [*In angry protest.*] So?

Pantoja. Be calm, Sir.

Maximo. I do not intend to be calm!

Evarista. It is the hour of prayer for the choir. Don Salvador means that after their devotions . . .

Pantoja. Exactly . . . And to convince them that I fear nothing, they may bring along with them besides the lawyer whatever government officials they choose. I shall order the doors of the house thrown open. I shall allow you to speak as much as you like with Electra, and if she wants to go, she may go . . .

Marquis. Will you keep your word?

Pantoja. Why not, since I put my trust in God? [PANTOJA *and* MAXIMO *exchange looks in silence.*]

Maximo. I also put my trust in God.

Pantoja. Then, in that case, I shall await you here.

Marquis. We shall return this afternoon. [*He takes* MAXIMO *by the arm.*]

Pantoja. And we shall go to church. [DON URBANO, EVARISTA, *and* PANTOJA *exeunt.*]

[MAXIMO *walks restlessly about the stage, in great perturbation of mind.*]

Marquis. What do you say to that?

Maximo. That this man with his eminent ability for fascinating the weak and tricking the strong will yet put us beside ourselves. I have no bent for this kind of a contest, and my feelings would make me resort to violence.

Marquis. What would you do, then?

Maximo. Carry her off with her consent, or by main force. If I lack the means to do so, I will seek them, find them, buy them; bring friends, accomplices, a regiment, an army . . . [*With growing energy and impetuosity.*] In me live once again the days of romance and the fierce spirit of the feudal age.

Marquis. And he who thinks and speaks so—is a man of science?

Maximo. Extremes meet. [*With increasing excitement.*] This man, this monster . . . must be done to death!

Marquis. Let us not go so far, my son. Rather imitate him; be as artful, crafty, persistent, as he.

Maximo. [*Eagerly, vehemently.*] No, on the contrary. Let us both be what I am; sincere, frank, daring. Let us go up against the enemy in the open. Let us overpower him if we can; if not, let him charge at a single blow! He must fall, or we.

Marquis. Ah, no, my friend. Have a care. We must respect the social order in which we live.

Maximo. And this social order in which we live will involve us in a net of evasions and falsehoods; and in this net we shall be strangled without the possibility of self de-

fense . . . caught, like fish by the gills . . . in the meshes of a myriad capricious laws, and the treachery and corruption of unscrupulous men.

Marquis. Calm yourself. Let us summon our courage for our encounter this afternoon. Let us foresee the obstacles, that we may find a way to meet them. What will happen when we tell Electra that you and she were not born of the same mother?

Maximo. What will happen? She won't believe us. Her wrong belief is now imbedded in her soul too deep for us to dislodge it. Do you realize what continuous suggestion can achieve, how the atmosphere of this house can stifle the thoughts of those who breathe it.

Marquis. Then let us use effective means. . . .

Maximo. [*With greater vehemence.*] Yes, effective means; set this house on fire, set the city on fire.

Marquis. Do not talk nonsense. In case the girl doesn't want to come with us, we shall take her by main force.

Maximo. [*With strong feeling.*] We shall conquer by force, or perish desperately. I shall die, she will die, we shall all die.

Marquis. Die? No! We shall merely live on, broken hearted. That's all! So let us prepare for the worst. I have the keys to effect our entrance by New Street. Sister Dorothy sides with us. Hush!

Maximo. Ha! Main force! Main force!

Marquis. No, no; strategy!

Maximo. Forward, a frontal attack.

Marquis. A flanking movement rather! [*Taking him by the arm.*] And let us go now, for our mere presence here may arouse suspicion. [*Draws him away.*]

Maximo. Let's be gone.

Marquis. Trust me.

Maximo. I put my trust in God.

Scene Two

The scene changes to a court-yard in San José de la Penitencia. At the right a wall of the church, with windows, through which the light is shining. At the left, a large door by which one passes to another court-yard which opens on the street. In the rear, between the church and the building on the left, a heavy low arch, beyond which in the background lies the cemetery of the "Congregation." A dark night.

[Electra *and* Sister Dorothy *discovered.*]

Sister Dorothy. As sure as it is now night, two gentlemen have come to the holy house. They would carry you back into the world. Can you believe it?

Electra. Two gentlemen? You need not tell me their names. My heart can guess. Maximo and the Marquis de Ronda! If they really mean to carry me off, they greatly distress me. Since I came to this holy house I have engaged, as you know, in the wars of the spirit. I am trying by the grace of God, to change into a sister's love—a very different kind of affection that possessed my soul. It is as though the sun's warm rays had shone into my heart, and I must turn away from them to the cold light of the moon. But at last, incessant meditation, the anguish of my heart, and the sweet thoughts God has sent me, are giving me strength to conquer in the struggle.

Sister Dorothy. My sister, if you are confident of that new love, why should you fear to meet Maximo?

Electra. Because I fear the moment I meet him all the ground I have gained will be lost.

Sister Dorothy. [*Incredulous.*] Are you sure then that you have really gained any ground?

Electra. Oh, yes! A little . . . but only a little.

Sister Dorothy. Still, my dear sister, meeting this man will only serve as a test, whether you can . . .

Electra. [*With eagerness.*] Don't say that . . . In my present condition, at the start of the fight . . . my conscience would not be at peace one instant. Kind Heaven! I am tortured either way: I can not love him as a brother, and I must not love him as a husband. [*In a panic.*] What agony! Back to the world? No, no . . . I would rather stay here, in this dead solitude. Ah me, in this laboratory of the spirit where I am trying to melt my life, as it were, in the crucible—to mould it afresh.

Sister Dorothy. You deceive yourself. Your own thoughts, Electra, will not leave you in peace. Put your trust in God, and in those whom God sends to you. [*Speaking more openly.*] My sister, do not fear the man you think is your brother. Who knows, but it may yet be proved that he is not your brother?

Electra. [*Very much excited.*] Hush! Hush! When my heart is so distraught, any

word that suggests a doubt is idle and cruel. It does not soothe me; but goads me rather on to madness. My God, give me the truth, —or death!

Sister Dorothy. Be calm.

Electra. [*More and more excited.*] All that tormented me when I came here revives. Angels and demons crowd into my thoughts. Leave me! Oh, that I could flee from myself! [*She runs about the stage with great agitation.* SISTER DOROTHY *following her, and trying to quiet her.*]

Sister Dorothy. Do be calm, for Heaven's sake. Dear sister, your troubles are near their end. [*She looks with anxiety toward the door on the left.*]

Electra. [*Imagining that she hears a far away voice.*] Listen! My mother calls me. . . .

Sister Dorothy. Do not speak wildly. Other voices, voices of the living may be calling you.

Electra. No, it is my mother. Hush! [*Listening.* PANTOJA *enters from the right.*]

Pantoja. My daughter, how did you get out of the church without my seeing you?

Sister Dorothy. We came out for a breath of fresh air. Electra was stifling. [*Aside.*] It is almost time. God will help us.

Pantoja. My daughter, do you feel ill?

Electra. [*In a low voice.*] My mother calls me!

Pantoja. [*Taking her hand affectionately.*] The voice of your mother, speaking to you in spirit, will comfort you; will bind you with bonds of piety and love to this holy house. [*The choir of novices is heard in the church.*] Hark, my daughter: The voices of the angels calling to you from Heaven!

Electra. [*Her mind wandering.*] It's the singing of the children playing "ring-around-the-rosies!" and among their young voices—the voice of my mother calling me from her grave.

Pantoja. You are mistaken. It is the choir of holy angels!

Electra. They're not angels. No, no . . . for I hear my name. I recognize the cries of the little children. They move me to the quick. It is the little brothers of the Son of Man who fills our life with joy! [*The choir of novices is still heard, more faintly.*]

Pantoja. [*Restless.*] Sister Dorothy, tell the sister on duty to watch the doors on New Street and Ronda Street. [*Points to the right and left.*]

Sister Dorothy. At once, sir.

Pantoja. No, no. I'll go myself. I can trust nobody. I'll have all the court-yards, all the passage-ways and all the corners of the building watched. [*Alarmed, thinking he hears a noise.*] Hush! Don't you hear something?

Sister Dorothy. What? No, sir. It must be your imagination.

Pantoja. I thought I caught the sound of voices . . . and of knocking at some door in the distance. [*Listens.*]

Sister Dorothy. In what direction? [*Looking to the right, at rear of stage, behind the church.*]

Pantoja. The infirmary! Oh, I have no peace! I must see for myself. Electra, go back to the church. Sister, take her. Wait for me there. [*Hurrying them.*] Quick! [*Leads them to the church door. He goes out hastily and in great excitement at the rear on the right.* SISTER DOROTHY *watches him disappear, takes* ELECTRA'S *hand and quickly draws her back to the center of the stage.* ELECTRA, *as if without volition, allows herself to be led.*]

Sister Dorothy. This way. Not to the church.

Electra. Here! Fresh air! The breath of life!

Sister Dorothy. [*Aside anxiously.*] This is the hour set by the Marquis. We must use every minute, every second, or the opportunity will be lost. [*Looking to the left.*] I am going to show them the way into this court-yard. [*Aloud.*] Sister, wait here for me.

Electra. [*Alarmed.*] Where are you going? [*Clutches her arm.*]

Sister Dorothy. [*Forcibly disengaging herself.*] For your sake, I am keeping watch, to restore you to health, and to life. Prepare to leave this house of death and take me with you.

Electra. [*Trembling.*] Sister, do not leave me.

Sister Dorothy. This very moment decides your fate. You shall return to the world. You shall meet Maximo.

Electra. When?

Sister Dorothy. At once. You will see him come in that way. [*Points to the left.*] Hush . . . be brave . . .! Don't hold me. . . . Don't stir from here. [*Runs out at left.*]

Electra. Blessed Lord, Holy Virgin! . . . Can it be true? . . . There I shall see him? [*She thinks she sees* MAXIMO *in the dark.*] He . . . There he is . . . Maximo! [*Speak-*

ing as if in a dream, she draws back as she would from a real being.] Leave me . . . let me go . . . I cannot love you as a brother, I cannot . . . The crucible is in the fire, and in it I wish to cast my heart anew. Do you not understand why I cannot look at you? . . . Why then do you stare at me? . . . Do not take me back into the world . . . I seek the truth here. My mother calls me. [*Desperately.*] Mother, mother! [*Turns her face to the rear of the stage. As* ELECTRA'S *last words ring out, the figure of* ELEUTERIA *appears, very beautiful and in the garb of a nun, her back to the audience, her arms outstretched.*] Oh! [*A long pause.* ELECTRA *gazes at the vision.*]

[*The Shade of* ELEUTERIA *faintly shows against the dark background.* ELECTRA *moves towards her. They face each other, almost within reach.*]

Shade. I am your mother, and I am come to ease the anguish of your thwarted love. My words will bring peace again to your heart. No tie of Nature binds you to the man who chose you for his wife. What you were told, was an invention, suggested by affection for you, to draw you to our company and the quiet of this holy house.

Electra. Oh, mother, what blessed comfort!

Shade. The comfort of truth, and with truth go strength and hope. My daughter, look upon this brief immurement as a test for the temper of your soul and do not blame him who brought it upon you. If bridal love and the joys of home invite you, surrender to their sweet allurements, and do not pursue here a sanctity unto which you might not attain. For God is everywhere. I could not find him anywhere but here. Go you and seek him in his world, by paths better than those I trod, and . . . [*The voice dies away and the Vision fades out as* MAXIMO *is heard calling.*]

Maximo. [*At the door to the left.*] Electra!

Electra. [*Running to* MAXIMO.] Ah!

Pantoja. [*At the right.*] My daughter, where are you?

Marquis. She's here, with *us.*

Maximo. She is ours.

Pantoja. Will you desert me?

Maximo. It's not desertion. It is her return to life!

THE END

THE LOWER DEPTHS

(NA DNIE)

By MAXIM GORKI

Translated from the Russian by EDWIN HOPKINS

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MAXIM GORKI AND HIS PLAYS

The author of *The Lower Depths,* Alexei Maximovitch Pyeshhov, known under his pseudonym of "Maxim Gorki", was born in 1868 in Nizhni-Novgorod. In Russia he is perhaps equally famous as political propagandist and as writer. His first reputation in literature was gained by his stories and novels; and, indeed, although he has written thirteen plays, he is only incidentally a dramatist: his plays are only a by-product of his genius. Under the Czarist regime he had to quit Russia on account of his political activities. After the revolution of 1917 he returned, and worked as an editor under the Soviet government, but finally found himself in opposition to the administration and went to Germany, where he still resides. All of his literary work shows an overwhelming interest in the proletariat, who provide him with most of his characters. He lived much with these people, studied them from all points of view, learned their outlook on life, sympathized with them and understood them.

Of all Gorki's plays *The Lower Depths* alone rises to greatness. It was his first play, written, as he states, before he knew anything about technique. It is an ironical fact that after he learned to take mere technique more seriously, he wrote with less power. *The Lower Depths,* although clearly influenced by such great naturalistic tragedies as Hauptmann's *Weavers* and Tolstoi's *Power of Darkness,* is not the deliberate or even conscious product of any theory or any school. It is simply a work of art that springs from a spontaneous impulse to picture graphically and sympathetically certain phases of Russian life and character, the very material of which inevitably determines its own form and style. It is a series of pictures, without plot, without even continuity of action or ideas. The final impression is that of a composite picture of a complete group. Dark and tragic, it is yet saved from hopeless pessimism by a kind of philosophy that informs it, perhaps gained from Nietzsche, certainly suggesting him—that of the distant goal toward which the progress of the race is tending, the production of the superman, who is to be made possible by the apparently meaningless lives of millions of small persons, by their hopes and aspirations, by their very failures and despairs.

The play is somewhat burdened with a "message", and the raissoneur in the person of Luka is perhaps too prominent. But the characters are intensely alive; their inner conflicts and their various attitudes toward life, conscious or otherwise, the inherited traits and the environment that make them what they are, are clearly indicated and sharply differentiated. The moments of crisis are depicted with startling power. Intensely Russian in its questioning attitude, in its almost feverish attempt to penetrate to the foundations of life and character, its utter disregard of all accepted social formulas and its skepticism regarding all social institutions, it is yet universal in its significance and its appeal. Its "submerged" live in every country and every age; its underlying philosophy is as comprehensible in America as in Russia. With *The Weavers* and *The Power of Darkness,* it is one of a trinity of great naturalistic tragedies that live by means of their vivid portraits of universal human nature and not simply as leading representatives of a "naturalistic" technique that may, or may not, have had its day.

The Lower Depths was produced first in 1902 by the Moscow Art Theatre. In the following years it was presented in English in London, and, in 1903, in German in New York. Its first production in English in America was made in New York in 1919. In English translations it has appeared not only as *The Lower Depths* but also as *In the Depths, A Night Shelter, A Night's Lodging,* and *Submerged.*

CHARACTERS

(*In the order in which they first speak in the play*)

A Baron, *thirty-two years old*

Kvaschnya, *a market woman, about forty*

Bubnoff, *a capmaker, forty-five*

Kleshtsch, Andrew Mitritch, *locksmith, forty*

Nastiah, *twenty-four*

Anna, *wife of* Kleshtsch, *thirty*

Sahtin, *forty*

An Actor, *forty*

Kostilioff, Michael Ivanowitch, *lodging-house keeper, fifty-four*

Pepel, Waska, *twenty-eight*

Natasha, *sister of* Wassilissa, *twenty*

Luka, *a pilgrim, sixty*

Alyoschka, *a shoemaker, twenty*

Wassilissa-Karpovna, *wife of* Kostilioff, *twenty-six*

Medviedeff, *uncle of* Wassilissa, *policeman, fifty*

A Tartar, *forty, a porter*

Krivoi Zoba, *forty, a porter*

Several nameless tramps, supernumeraries

The action takes place in a large city in Russia at the present day

THE LOWER DEPTHS

ACT ONE

A basement-room resembling a cavern. The massive, vaulted stone ceiling is blackened with smoke, its rough plaster in places broken off. The light falls inwardly from above, through a square window on the left (of one facing the footlights). The left corner, PEPEL'S *quarter, is separated from the rest of the room by thin partitions, against which, extending from beneath the window towards C., is* BUBNOFF'S *bunk.*

In the right corner is a great Russian stove, the rear of which is set into the wall which arches over it; the portion of the stove which extends into the room being an incline up which the personages must scramble to reach the space under the archway.

In the massive wall to the right is a door to the kitchen, in which KVASCHNYA, *the* BARON, *and* NASTIAH *live.*

Below the window, on the left, is a broad bed with dirty cotton curtains. Slightly L. C. (adjoining PEPEL'S *room) a flight of a few steps leads back to a platform, from which, to the left and behind* PEPEL'S *room, lead other steps, to an entry or hallway.*

A door opens inwardly on this platform, while to the right another flight of stairs leads to a room R. U. E. over the stove, in which the proprietor and his family live. The balustrade is in a bad condition and a torn rug or quilt lies over it.

Between the stove and the short flight of steps stands a broad low bench with four legs, which serves as a bunk. Another such bunk is across the front of the stove, and a third is at the right below the door to the kitchen. Near this is a wooden block to which is secured a small anvil and vise. KLESHTSCH *sits on a smaller block, at work on a pair of old locks, into which he is fitting keys. At his feet are two bundles of keys of various sizes, strung on wire hoops, and a damaged samovar (a tea urn commonly used in Russia), a hammer and some files.*

In the middle of the room a great table, two benches, and a heavy tabouret, all unpainted and dirty. KVASCHNYA, *at the table R. cleaning a samovar, acts as housekeeper, while the* BARON *L. C. chews on a piece of black bread, and* NASTIAH *L. sits on the tabouret, her elbows on the table, her face in her hands, reading a tattered book.* ANNA, *in bed concealed by the curtains, is frequently heard coughing.* BUBNOFF *sits, tailor fashion on his bench, measuring off on a form which he holds between his knees, the pieces of an old pair of trousers which he has ripped up, cutting out caps to the best advantage. Behind him is a smashed hatbox from which he cuts visors, stacking the perfect ones on two nails in the partition and throwing the useless ones about the room. Around him are bits of oil-cloth and scraps.*

SAHTIN, *just awakening, on the bunk before the stove, grumbles and roars. On the stove, hidden by the left springer of the arch, the* ACTOR *is heard coughing and turning.*

TIME: *Early Spring. Morning.*

Baron. Go on. [*Desiring more of the story.*]

Kvaschnya. Never, I tell you, my friend—take it away. I've been through it all, I want you to know. No treasure could tempt me to marry again. [SAHTIN *grunts at this.*]

Bubnoff. [*To* SAHTIN.] What are you grunting about?

Kvaschnya. I, a free woman, my own boss, shall I register my name in somebody else's passport, become a man's serf, when nobody can say "that" to me now? Don't let me dream about it. I'll never do it. If he were a prince from America—I wouldn't have him!

Kleshtsch. You lie.

Kvaschnya. [*Turning toward him.*] Wh-at! [*Turns back.*]

Kleshtsch. You are lying. You are going to marry Abram.

Baron. [*Rises, takes* NASTIAH'S *book and reads the title.*] "Disastrous Love." [*Laughs.*]

Nastiah. [*Reaches for the book.*] Here! Give it back. Now; stop your joke.

[*The* BARON *eyes her and waves the book in the air.*]

Kvaschnya. [*To* KLESHTSCH *again.*] You lie, you red-headed billy goat; speaking to me like that, the nerve of it!

Baron. [*Gives* NASTIAH *a blow on the head with the book.*] What a silly goose you are, Nastiah.

Nastiah. Give it here. [*Snatches the book.*]

Kleshtsch. [*To* KVASCHNYA.] You are a great lady! . . . But just the same you'll be Abram's wife . . . That is what you want.

Kvaschnya. Certainly. [*Spoken ironically.*] To be sure . . . What else . . . And you beating your wife half to death.

Kleshtsch. [*Furiously.*] Hold your tongue, old slut! What's that to you?

Kvaschnya. [*Shouting.*] Ah, ha! You can't listen to the truth!

Baron. Now, they're let loose. Nastiah,—where are you?

Nastiah. [*Without raising her head.*] What? let me alone!

Anna. [*Putting her head out of the bed curtains.*] It is dawning already. For Heaven's sake! Stop screaming and quarreling.

Kleshtsch. Croaking again! [*Contemptuously.*]

Anna. Every day that God gives, you quarrel. Let me at least die in quiet.

Bubnoff. The noise isn't keeping you from dying.

Kvaschnya. [*Goes to* ANNA.] Tell me, Anna dear, how have you endured such a brute?

Anna. Let me be! Let me—

Kvaschnya. Now, now, you poor martyr. Still no better with your breast?

Baron. It is time for us to go to market, Kvaschnya.

Kvaschnya. Then let's go now. [*To* ANNA.] Would you like a cup of hot custard?

Anna. I don't need it; thank you, though. Why should I still eat?

Kvaschnya. Oh, eat! Hot food is always good. It is quieting. I will put it away for you in a cup and when your appetite comes, then eat. [*To the* BARON.] Let's go, sir. [*To* KLESHTSCH, *going around him.*] Huh! you Satan!

Anna. [*Coughing.*] Oh, God!

Baron. [*Jostles* NASTIAH *on the nape of the neck.*] Drop it . . . you goose.

Nastiah. [*Murmurs.*] Go on. I am not in your way.

[*Turns a page. The* BARON *whistles in derision; crosses to R. Exit into kitchen following* KVASCHNYA.]

Sahtin. [*Gets up from his bunk.*] Who was it that beat me up yesterday?

Bubnoff. That's all the same to you.

Sahtin. Suppose it is. But what for?

Bubnoff. You played cards?

Sahtin. Played cards? Oh, so I did.

Bubnoff. That's why.

Sahtin. Crooks!

Actor. [*On the stove, thrusting his head out.*] They'll kill you once, some day.

Sahtin. You are—a blockhead!

Actor. Why so?

Sahtin. They couldn't kill me twice, could they?

Actor. [*After a short silence.*] I don't see it. —Why not?

Kleshtsch. [*Turning to him.*] Crawl down off the stove and clean the place up! You're too finicky, anyhow.

Actor. That's none of your business. . . .

Kleshtsch. Wait! . . . When Wassilissa comes she will show you whose business it is.

Actor. The devil take Wassilissa. The Baron must fix things up today, it's his turn. . . . Baron!

Baron. [*Enters R. from kitchen.*] I haven't time. I must go to market with Kvaschnya.

Actor. That's nothing to me. . . . Go to the devil for all I care . . . but the floor must be swept up and it's your turn. . . . Don't imagine that I will do somebody else's work.

Baron. [*Crosses to* NASTIAH.] No? Then the deuce take you! Nastengka will sweep up a little. Say! You! "Disastrous Love!" Wake up! [*Takes the book.*]

Nastiah. [*Rising.*] What do you want? Give it here, you mischief maker. And this is a nobleman!

Baron. [*Gives the book back.*] Nastiah! Do a little bit of sweeping for me—will you?

Nastiah. [*Goes R. Exit R. into kitchen.*] Sure, I'm crazy to.

Kvaschnya. [*Within, to the* BARON.] Come along. They can certainly clean up without you. [*Exit* BARON *R.*] You, Actor, you must do it. You were asked to do it, so do it then. It won't break your back.

Actor. Now, always I—hm—I can't understand it.

[*The* BARON *enters from the kitchen carrying, by means of a yoke, two baskets containing fat jars covered with rags.*]

Baron. Pretty heavy today.

Sahtin. You could do that without being a baron.

Kvaschnya. [*To the* ACTOR.] See to it that you sweep up. [*Exit to the entry L. U. E. preceded by the* BARON.]

Actor. [*Crawls down from the stove.*] I must not inhale dust. It injures me [*self-pityingly*]. My organism is poisoned with alcohol. [*Sits introspectively on the bunk before the stove.*]

Sahtin. Orgism. Organism [*derisively*].

Anna. [*To* KLESHTSCH.] Andrew Mitritch.

Kleshtsch. What is the matter now?

Anna. Kvaschnya left some custard for me. Go eat it.

Kleshtsch. [*Crosses to her.*] Won't you eat?

Anna. I won't. Why should I eat? You—work. You must eat.

Kleshtsch. Are you afraid? Do not despair. Perhaps you'll be better again.

Anna. Go, eat. My heart is grieved; the end is near.

Kleshtsch. [*Moves away.*] Oh, no; perhaps—you can get up yet—such things have happened. [*Exit R. into kitchen.*]

Actor. [*Loudly, as though suddenly awakened from a dream.*] Yesterday, in the dispensary, the doctor said to me: "Your organism is poisoned with alcohol, through and through."

Sahtin. [*Laughing.*] Orgism!

Actor. [*With emphasis.*] Not orgism, but organism—or-gan-is-m.

Sahtin. Sigambrer!

Actor. [*With a deprecating movement of the hand.*] Ah! gibberish. I tell you I'm speaking in earnest. My organism is poisoned . . . so that I shall be injured if I sweep the room . . . and breathe the dust.

Sahtin. Microbites . . . ha!

Bubnoff. What are you muttering about?

Sahtin. Words . . . then there is still another word: transcendental.

Bubnoff. What does that mean?

Sahtin. I don't know, I've forgotten.

Bubnoff. Why do you say it then?

Sahtin. Just so . . . I'm tired of all our words, Bubnoff. Every one of them I've heard at least a thousand times.

Actor. As it says in Hamlet, "Words, words, words." A magnificent piece, "Hamlet"—I've played the grave digger.

Kleshtsch. [*Entering R. from the kitchen.*] Will you begin to play the broom?

Actor. That's very little to you. [*Strikes his breast with his fist.*] "The fair Ophelia! Nymph, in thy orisons. Be all my sins remembered!"

[*Within, somewhere in the distance, are heard dull cries and the shrill sound of a policeman's whistle.* KLESHTSCH *sits down to work and the rasping of his file is heard.*]

Sahtin. I love the incomprehensible rare words. As a young man I was in the telegraph service. I have read many books.

Bubnoff. So you have been a telegraph operator?

Sahtin. To be sure. [*Laughs.*] Many beautiful books exist, and a lot of curious words. I was a man of education, understand that?

Bubnoff. I've already heard so, a hundred times. What does the world care what a man was. I, for example, was a furrier, had my own place of business. My arm was quite yellow—from the dye, when I colored the furs—quite yellow, my friend, up to the elbow. I thought that my whole life long I could never wash it clean, would descend, with yellow hands, into my grave, and now look at them, they are—simply dirty, see!

Sahtin. And what more?

Bubnoff. Nothing more.

Sahtin. What of it all?

Bubnoff. I mean only . . . by way of example . . . no matter how gaily a man lays the color on, it all rubs off again . . . all off again! See!

Sahtin. Hm! . . . My bones ache!

Actor. [*Sits on the bunk before the stove, his arms over his knees.*] Education is a rigmarole, the main thing is genius. I once knew an actor . . . he could scarcely read the words of his part, but he played his hero in such a way that the walls of the theatre shook with the ecstasy of the public . . .

Sahtin. Bubnoff, give me five copecs.

Bubnoff. I've got only two myself.

Actor. I say, genius a leading man must have. Genius—believe in yourself, in your own power. . . .

Sahtin. Give me five copecs and I will believe that you are a genius, a hero, a crocodile, a precinct captain. Kleshtsch, give me a fiver.

Kleshtsch. Go to the devil. There are too many ragamuffins about.

Sahtin. Stop scolding; I know you have nothing.

Anna. Andrew Mitritch . . . It is suffocating. It is hard. . . .

Kleshtsch. What can I do about that?

Bubnoff. Open the door to the street floor.

Kleshtsch. Well said! You sit on your bench and I on the ground. Let us change places and then open the door . . . I have a cold already.

Bubnoff. [*Undisturbed.*] It is not for me. . . . Your wife asks for it.

Kleshtsch. [*Scowling.*] A good many things are being asked for in this world.

Sahtin. My headpiece hums. Ah, why do people always go for your head?

Bubnoff. Not only the head, but also other parts of the body are often struck. [*Gets up.*] I must get some thread. The landlord and landlady are late today. But they might be rotting already for all I know.

[*Exit L. U. E.* ANNA *coughs.* SAHTIN, *with his hands under his neck, lies motionless.*]

Actor. [*Regards the atmosphere gloomily and goes to* ANNA'S *bed.*] Well, how is it? Bad?

Anna. It is stifling. . . .

Actor. Shall I take you out into the entry? . . . Get up then. [*He helps the sick woman up, throws tattered shawl over her shoulders and supports her, as they totter up the steps to the landing.*] Come, now . . . be brave. I, too, am a sick man—poisoned with alcohol.

[*Enter* KOSTILIOFF, *L. U. E.*]

Kostilioff. [*At the door.*] Out for a promenade? What a fine couple—Jack and Jill.

Actor. Stand aside. Don't you see that—the sick are passing by?

Kostilioff. All right, pass by, then. [*Humming the melody of a church hymn, he takes a mistrustful look about the basement, descends to the floor, leans his head to the left as if to overhear something in* PEPEL'S *room.* KLESHTSCH *claps furiously with the keys and files noisily, the proprietor giving him a black look.*] Busy scraping, eh? [*Crosses to R. F.*]

Kleshtsch. What?

Kostilioff. Busy scraping, I said . . . [*Pause.*] Hm—yes . . . What was I going to say? [*Hastily and in a lower tone.*] Wasn't my wife there?

Kleshtsch. Haven't seen her . . .

Kostilioff. [*Guardedly approaches the door of* PEPEL'S *room.*] How much space you take for your two rubles a month! That bed . . . You yourself sitting everlastingly here—nyah,[1] five rubles' worth, at least. I raise you half a ruble. . . .

Kleshtsch. Put a halter around my neck . . . and raise me a little more. You are an old man, you'll soon be rotting in your grave . . . and you think of nothing but half rubles.

Kostilioff. Why should I halter you? Who would be the better for that? Live, may God bless you, be content. Yet I raise you half a ruble to buy oil for the holy lamps . . . and my offering will burn before the holy image . . . for the remission of my sins, and thine also . . . You never think yourself of your sins, I guess, do you . . . ah, Andreuschka, what a sinful beast you are . . . your wife languishing in agony from your blows . . . nobody likes you, nobody respects you . . . your work is so grating that nobody can endure you. . . .

Kleshtsch. [*Cries out.*] Do you come . . . to hack me to pieces? [SAHTIN *roars aloud.*]

Kostilioff. [*Shudders.*] Ah . . . What is the matter with you, my friend?

Actor. [*Enters from stairs L. U. E.*] I took the woman into the entry . . . put her in a chair and wrapped her up warm. . . .

Kostilioff. What a good Samaritan you are. It will be rewarded. . . .

Actor. When?

Kostilioff. In the next world, brother dear. . . . There they sit and reckon up our every word and deed.

Actor. Why not, for the goodness of my heart, give me some recompense here?

Kostilioff. How can I do that?

Actor. Knock off half my debt. . . .

Kostilioff. Ha, ha, always having your fun, little buck, always jollying. . . . Can goodness of the heart be ever repaid with money? Goodness of the heart stands higher than all the treasures of this world. Nyah . . . and your debt—is only a debt. . . . There it stands. . . . Goodness of the heart you must bestow upon an old man without recompense. . . .

Actor. You are a cunning old knave. . . . [*Exit R. into kitchen.*]

[KLESHTSCH *rises and goes upstairs, L. U. E.*]

Kostilioff. [*To* SAHTIN.] Who just sneaked out? The scrape? He is not fond of me, he, he!

Sahtin. Who is fond of you except the devil?

Kostilioff. [*Laughs quietly.*] Don't scold. I have you all so nicely . . . my dear friends, but I am fond of you all, my poor, unhappy brethren, citizens of nowhere, hapless and helpless . . . [*Suddenly brisk.*] Tell me . . . is Waska at home?

Sahtin. Look and see for yourself.

Kostilioff. [*Goes to* PEPEL'S *door, L. U., and knocks.*] Waska!

[*Enter* ACTOR *R, standing in kitchen door chewing something.*]

[1] An expression equivalent to no or yes.

Pepel. [*Within.*] Who's that?

Kostilioff. Me, Waska. . . .

Pepel. [*Within.*] What do you want? . . .

Kostilioff. [*Stepping back.*] Open the door.

Sahtin. [*Pretending to be oblivious.*] She is there. The moment he opens it. . . .

[*The* Actor *chuckles to him.*]

Kostilioff. [*Disturbed, softly.*] How, who is in there? What. . . .

Sahtin. Hm? Are you speaking to me?

Kostilioff. What did you say?

Sahtin. Nothing at all . . . only . . . to myself . . .

Kostilioff. Take good care of yourself, my friend . . . you are too waggish. [*Knocks loudly on the door.*] Wassili . . .

Pepel. [*Opening the door.*] What are you bothering me about?

Kostilioff. [*Peers into* Pepel's *room.*] *I* . . . you see . . . you see . . .

Pepel. Have you brought the money?

Kostilioff. I have a little business with you.

Pepel. Have you brought the money?

Kostilioff. Which money? . . . wait.

Pepel. Money, the seven rubles for the watch, see!

Kostilioff. Which watch, Waska? Ah, you . . . none of your tricks.

Pepel. Be careful. I sold you yesterday in the presence of witnesses a watch for ten rubles . . . I got three, and now I'll take the other seven. Out with them. What are you blinking about around here . . . disturbing everybody . . . and forgetting the main thing.

Kostilioff. Ssh! Not so quick, Waska. The watch was, indeed . . .

Sahtin. Stolen.

Kostilioff. [*Stoutly, sharply.*] I never receive stolen goods. . . . How dare you . . .

Pepel. [*Takes him by the shoulders.*] Tell me, why did you wake me up? What do you want?

Kostilioff. I . . . Nothing at all . . . I am going already . . . when you act so.

Pepel. Go then, and bring me the money.

Kostilioff. [*As he goes.*] Tough customers . . . ah! ah! [*Exit L. U. E.*]

Actor. Here is comedy for you!

Sahtin. Very good, I like it. . . .

Pepel. What did he want?

Sahtin. [*Laughing.*] Don't you catch on? He was looking for his wife. . . . Say, why don't you finish him, Waska?

Pepel. Would it pay to spoil my life for such stuff?

Sahtin. Spoil your life! Naturally you must do it cleverly . . . Then marry Wassilissa . . . and be our landlord. . . .

Pepel. That would be nice. You, my guests, would soon guzzle up the whole place, and me in the bargain . . . I am much too open-handed for you. [*Sits on the bunk, U.*] Yes, old devil! Waked me up out of my best sleep . . . I was having a beautiful dream. I dreamed that I was fishing, and suddenly I caught a big trout. A trout, I tell you . . . only in dreams are there such great trout. . . . I pulled and pulled, till his gills almost snapped off . . . and just as I was finishing him with a net . . . and thinking I had him.

Sahtin. 'Twasn't any trout, 'twas Wassilissa.

Actor. He has had her in the net a long while.

Pepel. [*Angrily.*] Go to the devil . . . with your Wassilissa.

Kleshtsch. [*Entering L. U. E.*] It's beastly cold outside. . . .

Actor. Why didn't you bring Anna back? She will freeze to death.

Kleshtsch. Natasha had taken her along to the kitchen. . . .

Actor. The old scamp will chase her out.

Kleshtsch. [*Crosses R. D. and sits down to work.*] Natasha will soon bring her in.

Sahtin. Wassili, five copecs.

Actor. Yes, five copecs, Waska, give us twenty . . .

Pepel. If I don't hurry. . . . You'll want a whole ruble . . . there! [*Gives the* Actor *a coin.*]

Sahtin. Giblartarr! There are no better men in the world than the thieves!

Kleshtsch. They get their money easy . . . they don't work. . . .

Sahtin. Money comes easy to many, but very few give it up easily . . . Work, if you arrange it so that work gives me joy, then perhaps I will work too . . . perhaps! When work is a pleasure—then life is beautiful . . . When you must work—then life is slavery. [*To* Actor.] Come Sardanapálus, we will go.

Actor. Come, Nebuchadnézzar, I will get as drunk as forty thousand topers. [*Exit both L. U. E.*]

Pepel. [*Gapes.*] How is your wife?

Kleshtsch. [*Pause.*] She won't last long, I guess.

Pepel. When I sit and watch you so, I think, what good comes of all your scraping.

Kleshtsch. What else shall I do?

Pepel. Do nothing.

Kleshtsch. How shall I eat?

Pepel. Other men eat without taking so much trouble.

Kleshtsch. Other men? You mean this ragged pack of tramps here, idlers, you call them men! I am a workingman . . . I am ashamed to look at them. I have worked from childhood on. Do you think that I shall never crawl out of this cesspool again? It is quite certain, let me work the skin off my hands, but I'll get out . . . wait until after my wife dies . . . six months in this hole . . . it seems like six years.

Pepel. What are you complaining about? . . . we are no worse than you.

Kleshtsch. No worse . . . people living on God's earth without honor or conscience?

Pepel. [*In an impartial tone, cool.*] What good is honor or conscience? You can't put such things on your feet when the snow is on the ground. Honor and conscience to those in power and authority.

Bubnoff. [*Enters L. U. E.*] Ug-h! I'm frozen stiff.

Pepel. Tell me, Bubnoff, have you a conscience?

Bubnoff. What? A conscience?

Pepel. Yes.

Bubnoff. What use is it to me? I'm no millionaire. . . .

Pepel. That's what I say. Honor and conscience are only for the rich—and yet Kleshtsch, here, is pulling us over the coals; we have no conscience he says . . .

Bubnoff. Does he want to borrow some from us?

Pepel. He has plenty of his own. . . .

Bubnoff. Maybe you'll sell us some? No, it don't sell here. If it was broken hat-boxes, I'd buy . . . but only on credit. . . .

Pepel. [*Instructively, to* KLESHTSCH.] You're certainly a fool, Andreuschka. You ought to hear what Sahtin says about a conscience . . . or the Baron. . . .

Kleshtsch. I have nothing to talk to them about. . . .

Pepel. They have more wit than you, even if they are drunks. . . .

Bubnoff. When a clever fellow drinks, he doubles his wit.

Pepel. Sahtin says: every man wants his neighbor to have some conscience—but for himself, he can do without it . . . and that's right.

[NATASHA *enters L. U. E., and behind her* LUKA, *with a staff in his hand, a sack on his back, and a small kettle and tea boiler at his girdle.*

Luka. Good day to you, honest folks.

Pepel. [*Pulling his moustache.*] A-h, Natasha.

Bubnoff. [*To* LUKA.] Honest were we once, as you must know, but since last spring, a year ago. . . .

Natasha. Here—a new lodger. . . .

Luka. [*To* BUBNOFF.] It's all the same to me. I know how to respect thieves, too. Any flea, say I, may be just as good as you or me; all are black, and all jump . . . that's the truth. Where shall I quarter myself here, my love?

Natasha. [*Points to the kitchen door.*] Go in there . . . daddy.

Luka. Thank you, my girl, as you say . . . A warm corner is an old man's delight.

[*Exit R. into kitchen.*]

Pepel. What an agreeable old chap you have brought along, Natasha!

Natasha. No matter, he is more interesting than you. [*Then to* KLESHTSCH.] Andrew, your wife is with us in the kitchen . . . come for her after a while.

Kleshtsch. All right, I'll come.

Natasha. Be good to her now . . . we won't have her long . . .

Kleshtsch. I know it . . .

Natasha. Yes, you know it . . . but that is not enough! Make it quite clear to yourself, think what it means to die . . . it is frightful. . . .

Pepel. You see I am not afraid. . . .

Natasha. The brave are not. . . .

Bubnoff. [*Whistles.*] The thread is rotten.

Pepel. Certainly I am not afraid, I would welcome death right now. Take a knife and strike me in the heart—not a murmur will I utter. I would meet death with joy . . . from clean hands . . . like yours.

Natasha. [*As she goes.*] Do not say anything which is not so, Pepel.

Bubnoff. [*Drawling.*] The thread is absolutely rotten.

Natasha. [*From the door to the entry.*] Don't forget your wife, Andrew.

Kleshtsch. All right. [*Exit* NATASHA.]

Pepel. A fine girl.

Bubnoff. None better.

Pepel. But what has set her against me so? She alone . . . always refusing me . . . but this life will be her ruin, all the same.

Bubnoff. It is you who will be the ruin of her.

Pepel. I be her ruin? . . . I pity her . . .

Bubnoff. As the wolf pities the lamb.

Pepel. You lie! I do pity her . . . Her lot is very hard. . . . I see that. . . .

Kleshtsch. Just wait until Wassilissa finds you together. . . .

Bubnoff. Yes, Wassilissa! Nobody can play any tricks on her, the fiend.

Pepel. [*Stretches himself out on the bunk, U.*] The devil take you both, prophets.

Kleshtsch. Wait . . . and see. . . .

Luka. [*Within, singing.*] "In the darkness of midnight, no path can be found."

Kleshtsch. Now he is beginning to howl. . . . [*Crosses to L. U. E.*] He too is beginning. [*Exit.*]

Pepel. My heart is in the depths . . . why is it? We live and live and everything goes well . . . then all of a sudden . . . melancholy like a blighting frost settles upon us. Life is used up. . . .

Bubnoff. Sad, melancholy, eh? . . .

Pepel. Yes . . . by God.

Luka. [*Singing.*] "No path can be found."

Pepel. Heh, you bag of bones.

Luka. [*Enters R.*] Do you mean me?

Pepel. Yes, you. Cut the singing out.

Luka. [*Crossing to C.*] Don't you like singing?

Pepel. When singing is well sung, I enjoy it.

Luka. Then I do not sing well?

Pepel. That's about right.

Luka. Too bad, and I thought that I sang beautifully. So it always goes. You think to yourself, I have done that well, but the public is not pleased. . . .

Pepel. [*Laughs.*] You are right, there.

Bubnoff. Ump! roaring again, and just now you said life was so sad, melancholy.

Pepel. What have you to say about it, old raven? . . .

Luka. Who is despondent?

Pepel. I . . .

[*The* Baron *enters L. U. E.*]

Luka. So, and there—in the kitchen sits a girl reading a book and crying; upon my word! Her tears flowing . . . I asked her, what troubles you, my love—eh? And she said: It is so pitiful . . . Whom do you pity then? I asked. . . . See, here in the book, the people, said she . . . And that is how she passes her time to drive away despondency, it appears. . . .

Baron. She is a fool.

Pepel. Have you had your tea, Baron? [*An invitation.*]

Baron. Tea, yes . . . anything more?

Pepel. Shall I stand for a bottle of rum, eh, that's right.

Baron. Of course . . . what more?

Pepel. Let me ask you to stand on all fours and bark like a dog.

Baron. Blockhead; are you a Crœsus? Or are you drunk?

Pepel. That's right, bark away. I shall enjoy it. . . . You are a gentleman. . . . There was a time once when you did not take us for human beings even . . . and so on . . . and so on.

Baron. Well, and what more?

Pepel. What more? I'll let you bark now. You'll bark, won't you?

Baron. I have no objection on my own account . . . booby. How can it be such fun for you? . . . When I know myself that I am sunk deeper even than you. . . . Had you once dared you ought to have tried to get me on all fours when I was above you.

Bubnoff. You are right.

Luka. So I say too, you are right.

Bubnoff. What has been has been. Nothing is left but trash . . . we are not dukes here . . . the trappings are gone . . . only the bare man remains. . . .

Luka. All are alike, know that. . . . Were you once a baron, my friend?

Baron. What's that you say? Who are you, sepulchre?

Luka. [*Laughs.*] An earl I have seen already and a prince . . . too . . . But now for the first time, a baron, and a seedy one. . . .

Pepel. [*Laughs.*] Ha, ha, ha, I blush for you, Baron.

Baron. Don't be an idiot, Wassili. . . .

Luka. Yes, yes, my friends. When I look around me . . . this life here . . . ah!

Bubnoff. This life, . . . why, this life here would make any man howl, from break-o'-day on, like a starving owl.

Baron. To be sure, we have all seen better days. I for example . . . On waking up I used to drink my coffee in bed . . . coffee with cream . . . that's right.

Luka. And you are still a man. No matter what somersaults you turn before us, as a man you were born and as a man you must die. The more I look about myself, the more I contemplate mankind, the more interesting he grows . . . poorer and poorer he sinks and higher and higher his aspirations mount . . . obstinacy.

Baron. Tell me, old man . . . exactly who you are . . . where do you come from?

Luka. Who? I?

Baron. Are you a pilgrim?

Luka. We are all pilgrims here on this earth. . . . It has been said, even, I am told, that our earth is only a pilgrimage to Heaven's gate. . . .

Baron. It is so, but tell me . . . have you a passport?

Luka. [*Hesitatingly.*] Who are you? A detective?

Pepel. [*Briskly.*] Well said, old man! Ha, my lord, that went home!

Bubnoff. He gets what is coming to him.

Baron. [*Disconcerted.*] Well! well! I am only joking, old man. I've no papers, myself.

Bubnoff. You lie!

Baron. That is to say . . . I have papers . . . but they're of no use.

Luka. So it is with all pen scratches . . . they're of no use. . . .

Pepel. Baron! Come have one, for the sake of thirst. . . .

Baron. I'm with you. Bye-bye, see you again, old chap. . . . You're a sly dog. . . .

Luka. It may be true, my friend.

Pepel. [*At the door L. U. E.*] Are you coming? [*Exit followed quickly by the* BARON.]

Luka. Has the man really been a baron?

Bubnoff. Who knows? He has been a nobleman, that is certain. Even now his former air shows through. The manner clings. . . .

Luka. Breeding is like the smallpox: The man recovers, but the pits remain.

Bubnoff. But otherwise he is a good fellow . . . except that sometimes he is overbearing. . . . As he was about your passport. . . .

Alyoschka. [*Enters L. U. E. drunk, an accordion under his arm. He whistles.*] Hey, there, neighbors.

Bubnoff. What are you howling about?

Alyoschka. Excuse me, please . . . pass it over. I am a cozy boy. . . .

Bubnoff. Broken out again?

Alyoschka. Why not? Police captain Medviskin has just chased me off his beat. "Take your stand out of the street," says he. No, no, I am still a youth of good temperament . . . the boss was jawing at me too . . . bah, what do I care for bosses . . . bah, everything is all a mistake, should a tank be boss . . . I am a man, who . . . never a wish have . . . has . . . I want nothing . . . that settles it . . . now, take me . . . for one ruble and twenty copecs you can have me . . . and I want absolt-ly nothing. [NASTIAH *enters R. from kitchen.*] Offer me a million—and I will not take it. And that whiskey barrel, to be boss over me, a good man, no better than—it don't go. I'll not stand for it.

[NASTIAH *remains standing at the door, shaking her head at the spectacle of* ALYOSCHKA.]

Luka. [*Good-naturedly.*] Ah, boy . . . you can't unravel it.

Bubnoff. There you have human folly.

Alyoschka. [*Lies down on the floor.*] Now, eat me up. Costs nothing. I am a desperado. You just tell me, am I worse than the others? How am I worse? Just think, Medviskin said: "Don't show yourself on the street, or else I'll give you one in the snout." But I'll go . . . I'll lie down crosswise in the street, let them choke me. I want ab-solt-ly nothing. . . . [*Rises.*]

Nastiah. Wretch . . . so young and putting on such airs. . . .

Alyoschka. [*Sees her and kneels.*] My lady, my fräulein, ma'm'sell! Parlez français . . . price current . . . I am jagging.

Nastiah. [*Whispers loudly.*] Wassilissa. [*Sees her coming.*]

Wassilissa. [*Opens door at head of stairs R. U. E. to* ALYOSCHKA.] Here again, . . . already?

Alyoschka. Good morning. Please, come down.

Wassilissa. Didn't I tell you, you pup, not to show yourself here again? [*Descends.*]

Alyoschka. Wassilissa Karpovna—if you please, I'll play you a funeral march.

Wassilissa. [*Pushes him on the shoulder.*] Get out!

Alyoschka. [*Shuffles to the door, L. U. E.*] No, I won't wait. First listen to the funeral march. . . . I've just learned it . . . new music . . . wait a minute . . . you mustn't act so.

Wassilissa. I will show you how I must act . . . I'll put the whole street on your track, you damned heathen . . . so, telling folks on me. . . .

Alyoschka. [*Runs out L. U. E.*] No, I am already gone. [*Exit.*]

Wassilissa. [*To* Bubnoff.] See to it that he does not set foot in here again, you hear?

Bubnoff. I'm not your watchman.

Wassilissa. No, but you are a dead beat. How much do you owe me?

Bubnoff. [*Calmly.*] I haven't counted it up. . . .

Wassilissa. Look out or I'll count it up.

Alyoschka. [*Opens the door and cries.*] Wassilissa Karpovna, I am not afraid of you . . . I am not afraid. [*He hides behind a cloth which hangs over the balustrade and* Luka *laughs.*]

Wassilissa. And who are you?

Luka. A pilgrim, a mere wanderer. I go from place to place. . . .

Wassilissa. Will you stay over night . . . or for good?

Luka. I will see.

[Alyoschka *slips into the kitchen.*]

Wassilissa. Your passport.

Luka. You may have it.

Wassilissa. Give it to me, then.

Luka. I'll get it presently . . . I'll drag it to your room. . . .

Wassilissa. A pilgrim—You look it; say a vagabond . . . that sounds more like the truth.

Luka. [*Sighs.*] You are not very hospitable, mother.

[Wassilissa *goes to* Pepel's *door.*]

Alyoschka. [*Whispers, from the kitchen.*] Has she gone? . . . hm.

Wassilissa. [*Turns on him.*] Are you still there?

[Alyoschka *disappears into the kitchen, whistling.* Nastiah *and* Luka *laugh.*]

Bubnoff. [*To* Wassilissa.] He is not there.

Wassilissa. Who?

Bubnoff. Waska.

[Alyoschka *slips around to the stairs, exit L. U. E.*]

Wassilissa. Have I asked you for him?

Bubnoff. I can see that you are looking into every corner.

Wassilissa. I am looking after things, do you understand? Why have you not swept up? How often have I told you that you must keep the place clean?

Bubnoff. It's the actor's turn to-day. . . .

Wassilissa. It makes no difference to me whose turn it is. When the Health Department people come and fine me, I'll have you thrown out. . . .

Bubnoff. [*Calmly.*] And what will you live on, in that case?

Wassilissa. See that not a speck of dust is left. [*Goes to the kitchen door to* Nastiah.] And what are you standing around like a post for? What are you gawking about? Sweep up! Have you not seen . . . Natalya? Has she been here?

Nastiah. I don't know . . . I haven't seen her.

Wassilissa. Bubnoff, was my sister here?

Bubnoff. Certainly. She brought the old man.

Wassilissa. And he, was he in his room?

Bubnoff. Wassili . . . to be sure . . . She was talking with Kleshtsch . . . Natalya. . . .

Wassilissa. I did not ask you who she was talking with. . . . Dirt everywhere, a foot thick. Ah, you pigs. See that you clean up . . . do you hear me? [*Exit quickly R. U. E.*]

Bubnoff. What a nasty temper that woman has.

Luka. A brutal wife.

Nastiah. This life would brutalize anybody. And tied to such a husband—how can she bear that?

Bubnoff. She does not feel tied, so very tight. . . .

Luka. Is she always . . . so biting?

Bubnoff. Always . . . she was looking for her lover, you see, and that dismayed her.

Luka. Um, so that's the trouble . . . ah, yes, how many different people there are here on this earth go bossing around . . . and all trying to lord it over the rest, but in spite of it all bringing no cleanness about.

Bubnoff. They try, indeed, to bring order about, but the wit is lacking . . . which means, that we must finally clean up . . . Nastiah . . . won't you do it? . . .

Nastiah. Certainly! Am I your chambermaid? [*She remains silent for a time.*] I'll get drunk today . . . soaked full. [*Motion of her hand to her chin.*]

Bubnoff. Good business.

Luka. What are you going to get drunk for, my daughter? You were crying a moment ago, and now you promise to get drunk.

Nastiah. [*Defiantly.*] And when I have gotten drunk, I will cry again . . . that's all.

Bubnoff. But it's not much.

Luka. For what reason, tell me? Everything has a cause, even the smallest pimple in the face.

[Nastiah *is silent, shaking her head.*]

Luka. Aye, aye, such is man . . . that's the way with people, what will become of them? I will sweep up myself. Where do you keep the broom?

Bubnoff. In the entry, behind the door. [*Exit* LUKA *L. U. E.*] Tell me, Nastenka.

Nastiah. [*Sits R. U. before stove.*] Um.

Bubnoff. What has Wassilissa got against Alyoschka, so much?

Nastiah. He has told everybody that Waska don't like her any more . . . is tired of her, is going to give her up, for Natasha interests him . . . I am going to pull out and find another place. . . .

Bubnoff. Why so?

Nastiah. I am tired of it. I am in the way . . . superfluous.

Bubnoff. [*Thoughtfully.*] Where wouldn't you be superfluous? Everybody here on earth is superfluous. . . .

[NASTIAH *shakes her head, rises and goes quietly up-stairs R. U. E.* MEDVIEDEFF *enters L. U. E. followed by* LUKA *with the broom.*]

Medviedeff. [*To* LUKA.] I don't remember having seen you.

Luka. And the rest, you've seen them. Do you know everybody?

Medviedeff. Along my beat I must know everybody—and I don't know you. . . .

Luka. You would, if your beat included the whole world, but there is a small corner which has been left off. [*Exit R.*]

Medviedeff. [*Crossing to* BUBNOFF *L.*] That's right. My beat is not large . . . but the work is worse than in many bigger ones. Just as I came off duty I had to take that young cobbler Alyoschka to the station house. The rascal was sprawled out on his back in the middle of the street, if you can believe it, playing his accordion and bellowing: "I want for nothing, I wish for nothing," and wagons coming both ways and traffic everywhere. . . . He could easily have been run over, or something else happen . . . rattle-brain. . . . Of course I locked him up . . . he is a little too fresh.

Bubnoff. Come around tonight . . . We'll have a game of checkers.

Medviedeff. I'll come . . . hm, yes . . . but how is it about Waska?

Bubnoff. All right. . . . Same old thing. . . .

Medviedeff. Still alive?

Bubnoff. Why not, his life is worth living.

Medviedeff. [*Doubtfully.*] So . . . has he?

[LUKA *enters R. from kitchen, and exit L. U. E. a bucket to his hand.*] Hm—yes . . . there is a rumor about . . . Waska . . . haven't you heard?

Bubnoff. I've heard lots of things.

Medviedeff. Something about Wassilissa, he . . . have you not noticed?

Bubnoff. What?

Medviedeff. Why . . . in general . . . you know all about it but don't like to say so . . . it is well known . . . [*strongly*] don't lie, my friend!

Bubnoff. Why should I lie?

Medviedeff. I thought . . . ah, the curs . . . they say, in short that Waska with Wassilissa . . . so to speak . . . nyah, what do I care? I am not her father, but only . . . her uncle. . . . It can't hurt me if they can't laugh at me. [KVASCHNYA *enters L. U. E.*] A bad lot . . . ah, you have come. . . .

Kvaschnya. My dear captain. Just think, Bubnoff, he proposed to me again at the market. . . .

Bubnoff. What of it? Why do you put him off? He has money, and is a pretty hearty lover, even yet. . . .

Medviedeff. I, . . . to be sure.

Kvaschnya. Ah, you old gray studhorse. No, don't come near. That foolishness happens to me only once in a lifetime, and I've been through it already. Marriage, for a woman, is like jumping into the river in winter; once she's done it, she remembers it all her life.

Medviedeff. Wait . . . the husbands are not all the same. . . .

Kvaschnya. But I always remain the same. When my dear husband—when the devil took him—when he became a carcass, damn his ghost, I did not leave the house the whole day for joy; I sat there all alone and could scarcely believe my happiness.

Medviedeff. Why did you allow your husband to beat you? If you had gone to the police. . . .

Kvaschnya. Police! I complained to God for eight years . . . and even God couldn't do anything.

Medviedeff. But it is illegal now to beat wives. . . . Law and order are now enforced. . . . No man dare beat anybody now, except for the sake of law and order. . . . Wife beating happens only in lawless places. . . .

Luka. [*Leads* ANNA *in, L. U. E.*] Now, look out . . . now we've crawled down . . .

ah, you poor child . . . How could you go around alone so, in your condition? Where is your bed?

Anna. [*Draws toward L. D.*] Thank you, daddy.

Kvaschnya. There you have a married woman . . . look at her.

Luka. Such a poor, weak thing . . . creeping about quite alone there up in the entry, clinging to the walls—moaning without cease . . . why did you allow her to go out alone?

Kvaschnya. We did not notice it—pardon me, grandfather. Her lady in waiting has probably gone for a stroll. . . .

Luka. So you laugh. . . . How can you abandon another so? Whatever he may have become—he still remains a human being.

Medviedeff. This ought to be investigated. If she dies suddenly? We shall be mixed up in it. Give her every attention.

Luka. Quite right, Mr. Captain. . . .

Medviedeff. Hm . . . yes . . . you may say so . . . though I'm not a captain yet. . . .

Luka. Is it possible? But we should conclude from your appearance that you are a true hero.

[*From above a noise, the stamping of feet and smothered cries.*]

Medviedeff. Not quite yet—looks like a row.

Bubnoff. It sounds like one. . . .

Kvaschnya. I'll go see.

Medviedeff. And I've got to go too . . . ah, the service! Why should people be pulled apart when they brawl? They finally quit fighting of their own accord . . . when they are tired of thumping each other . . . the best thing to do is to let them get their bellies full of fighting . . . then they don't row so often . . . they aren't in shape to. . . .

Bubnoff. [*Gets off his bench.*] You must lay your plan before the authorities. . . .

Kostilioff. [*Throws open the door L. U. E. and cries.*] Abram . . . come . . . quick . . . Wassilissa is killing Natasha . . . come . . . come!

[Kvaschnya, Medviedeff, Bubnoff, *run to the entry, L. U. E., and* Luka *looks after them, shaking his head.*]

Anna. Ah, God . . . the poor Natashenka

Luka. Who is brawling there?

Anna. Our landlady . . . the two sisters.

Luka. [*Approaches* Anna.] Over heirlooms.

Anna. Both are well fed . . . both are healthy. . . .

Luka. And you . . . what is your name?

Anna. My name is Anna. . . . When I look at you . . . you are so much like my father, just like my own dear father . . . you, too, are so kind and tender. . . .

Luka. Because they have knocked me about the world so much, that is why I am tender. [*Chuckles to himself.*]

ACT TWO

The same scene. Evening. Sahtin, *the* Baron, Krivoi Zoba *and the* Tartar *are sitting on the bunk before the stove, playing cards.* Kleshtsch *and the* Actor *are watching the game.* Bubnoff *on his bench is playing Parti-Dame with* Medviedeff. Luka *is sitting on the tabouret at* Anna's *bed. The room is lit by two lamps, one hanging on the wall over the card players on the right and the other above* Bubnoff's *bench.*

Tartar. I'll play one more game . . . and then I quit. . . .

Bubnoff. Krivoi Zoba! A song. [*He sings.*] "Though still the sun goes up and down."

Krivoi Zoba. [*Falling in.*] "No gleam can pierce to me in here. . . ."

Tartar. [*To* Sahtin.] Shuffle the cards, but no crooked business. We already know what a swindler you are.

Bubnoff and Krivoi Zoba. [*Sing together.*] "By day and night my guards stand watch —a—ach,
My prison window always near. . . ."

Anna. Illness and blows. . . . I have endured . . . they have been my lot . . . my whole life long.

Luka. Ah, you poor child! Do not grieve.

Medviedeff. What nerve! Be careful!

Bubnoff. Ah, ha! So . . . and so, and so . . . [*Throws down card after card.*]

Tartar. [*Threatens* Sahtin *with his fist.*] What are you hiding the cards for! I saw you . . . you.

Krivoi Zoba. Let him go, Hassan. They're bound to cheat us, one way or another. . . . Sing some more, Bubnoff.

Anna. I cannot remember to have ever had enough to eat . . . with trembling and fear . . . have I eaten every piece of bread. . . . I have trembled and constantly feared . . . lest I eat more than my share. . . . My

whole life long have I gone in rags . . . my whole ill-fated life. . . . Why should this have been?

Luka. Ah, you poor child! You are tired? It will soon be right!

Actor. [*To* KRIVOI ZOBA.] Play the jack . . . the jack, damn it.

Baron. And we have the king!

Kleshtsch. These cards will always win.

Sahtin. So . . . they will.

Medviedeff. A queen!

Bubnoff. Another . . . there!

Anna. I am dying. . . .

Kleshtsch. [*To the* TARTAR.] There—look out! Throw the cards down, prince, stop playing.

Actor. Don't you think he knows what to do?

Baron. Be careful, Andrejuschka, that I don't throw you out of the house.

Tartar. Again, I say. The pitcher goes to the well, then it breaks . . . the same with me. . . .

[KLESHTSCH *shakes his head and goes behind* BUBNOFF.]

Anna. I am always thinking to myself: My Saviour . . . shall I there too . . . in that world . . . endure such tortures?

Luka. No! Never! . . . You will suffer nothing. Lie perfectly still . . . and have no fear. You shall find peace there! Be patient yet a little while. . . . We must all suffer, my love. . . . Every one endures life in his own way. [*He rises and goes hastily into the kitchen R.*]

Bubnoff. "Spy on, with the might of your eyes, forever."

Krivoi Zoba. "On freedom still my thoughts shall dwell. . . ."

Together. "I cannot spring these chains and locks—a—ach. . . .
Nor fly the walls of this cold cell. . . ."

Tartar. Stop! He has pushed a card up his sleeve.

Baron. [*Confused.*] No, where else then?

Actor. [*Convincingly.*] You have made a mistake, prince! It's not to be thought of.

Tartar. I saw it! Cheats! I play no more!

Sahtin. [*Throwing the cards together.*] Then go your way, Hassan. . . . You know that we are cheats—so why did you play with us?

Baron. He's lost forty copecs, you'd think from the row that he'd lost three hundred. And this is a prince!

Tartar. [*Violently.*] Everybody must play fair!

Sahtin. But tell me why?

Tartar. What does "why" mean?

Sahtin. Just so . . . why?

Tartar. Um, you don't know?

Sahtin. I don't know, do you?

[*The* TARTAR *spits angrily, all laugh at him.*]

Krivoi Zoba. [*Cheerfully.*] You are a comical owl, Hassan. Think it over. If they lived honestly they would starve in three days. . . .

Tartar. What's that to me? People must live honestly.

Krivoi Zoba. Same old story, I'd rather have a drink of tea . . . cut loose, Bubnoff.

Bubnoff. "Alas, these heavy chains of iron, this armed patrol on ceaseless guard. . . ."

Krivoi Zoba. Come, Hassan. [*Exit singing.*] "No, nevermore shall I break through."

[*The* TARTAR *threatens the* BARON *with his fist, and then follows his comrade. Exit R.*]

Sahtin. [*To the* BARON, *laughing.*] Nyah, your worship, you've launched us triumphantly into the mire. You, an educated man, and can't handle cards. . . .

Baron. [*Throwing up his hands.*] The devil knows how the cards should be handled.

Actor. No genius, no self-confidence . . . without that you'll never be any good. . . .

Medviedeff. I have a queen, and you have two, hm, yes.

Bubnoff. One is enough, if well played . . . your play.

Kleshtsch. The game is lost, Abram Ivanitsch.

Medviedeff. That is none of your business—understand? Hold your tongue. . . .

Sahtin. Fifty-three copecs won. . . .

Actor. The three copecs are for me . . . though what do I want with three copecs?

Luka. [*Entering from kitchen R.*] You soaked the Tartar dry. Are you going for some?

Baron. Come with us!

Sahtin. I'd just like to see you after you've put a couple of dozen away. . . .

Luka. Surely I wouldn't look better than I do sober. . . .

Actor. Come, old fellow . . . I will declaim for you a pair of pretty couplets. . . .

Luka. Couplets? What are they?

Actor. Verses, don't you understand? . . .

Luka. Verses, for me . . . poems? What do I want them for?

Actor. Ah, they are so comical . . . yet sometimes so sad. . . .

Sahtin. Are you coming, couplet singer? [*Exit L. U. E. with the* BARON.]

Actor. I will catch up with you. [*To* LUKA.] There is, old man, for example, a poem beginning . . . I have completely forgotten it . . . [*Rubs his forehead.*]

Bubnoff. Your queen is lost . . . go.

Medviedeff. I played wrong, the devil take it.

Actor. In the past, while my organism was not as yet poisoned with alcohol, I had a splendid memory . . . yes, patriarch! Now . . . it is all up with me . . . time and time again, with the greatest success I have recited this poem . . . to thundering applause. . . . Do you know what applause means, brother? It is the wine of wines . . . when I came out, in this posture [*assumes an attitude*] and then began . . . [*he is silent*] . . . not a word . . . have I retained. And the poem was my heart's delight. . . . Is that not frightful, patriarch? [*Clutches the air.*]

Luka. Alas, too bad . . . when the best beloved has been forgotten. In that which man loves, he finds his soul. . . .

Actor. I have drowned my soul, patriarch. . . . I am a lost man. . . . And why am I lost? Because I believe in myself no more. . . . I am through. . . .

Luka. Why so, then. Be cured! The drunkard, I have heard, can now be cured. Without expense, my brother. . . . A dispensary has been erected . . . there you may be cured without charge. They realize now, you see, that the drunkard is also a man, and they are glad when one comes to allow himself to be cured. Hurry, then, go there. . . .

Actor. [*Thoughtfully.*] Where to? Where is it?

Luka. In a certain city . . . what is it called? A strange name. . . . No, I can't tell you right now . . . but listen to me: You must begin to get ready! Be abstemious! Hold yourself together, and suffer, endure thus, . . . and then you'll be cured. Begin a new life . . . is that not splendid, brother: a new life . . . now, decide . . . one, two, three!

Actor. [*Smiling.*] A new life . . . from the start . . . that is beautiful. . . . Can it be true? A new life?—[*Laughs.*] Nyah . . . yes! I can! I can!

Luka. Why not? Man can achieve everything . . . if he only will. . . .

Actor. [*Suddenly, as if awakened from a dream.*] You're a queer customer! So long! See you again. [*He whistles.*] Meantime, old man. [*Exit L. U. E.*]

Anna. Daddy.

Luka. What is it, little mother?

Anna. Talk a little bit, to me. . . .

Luka. [*Going to her.*] Gladly . . . Let us have a long chat.

[KLESHTSCH *looks around, silently goes to the bed of his wife, looks at her, gesticulates, as if about to speak.*]

Luka. Well, brother?

Kleshtsch. [*Whispers as if in fear.*] Nothing.

[*Goes slowly to door, L. U. E. Remains a few moments, then goes out.*]

Luka. [*Following him with his eyes.*] Your husband seems to be oppressed.

Anna. I cannot think of him any more.

Luka. Has he beaten you?

Anna. How often . . . He has brought me . . . to this.

Bubnoff. My wife . . . had once an admirer. He played with kings and queens quite splendidly, the rascal. . . .

Medviedeff. Hm.

Anna. Grandfather . . . Talk to me, my dear . . . I am lonely. . . .

Luka. That is nothing. That may be felt before death, my dove. It means nothing, dear. Have faith. You will die, you see, and then enter into rest. Have fear of nothing more, of nothing more. It will be still, and peaceful . . . and you will lie resting there. Death subdues everything . . . he is so tender with us . . . Only in death shall rest be found, they say . . . and such is the truth, my love! Where shall rest be found here?

[PEPEL *enters L. U. E. a little drunk, dishevelled and sullen. He sits on the bunk by the kitchen door, silent and motionless.*]

Anna. And shall there be such torture there?

Luka. Nothing is there! Believe me, nothing! Rest alone—nothing else. They will lead you before the Master and will say: "Look, oh, Master—thy servant Anna is come. . . ."

Medviedeff. [*Vigorously.*] How can you know what shall be said there: have you ever heard? . . .

[PEPEL, *at the sound of* MEDVIEDEFF'S *voice, raises his head and listens.*]

Luka. My information is reliable, Mr. Commissioner. . . .

Medviedeff. [*Softly.*] Hm,—yes. Nyah, it is your affair . . . that means . . . but I am not a commissioner. . . .

Bubnoff. Two birds with one stone. . . .

Medviedeff. Ah, you, the devil take you. . . .

Luka. And the Master will look upon you in loving kindness and will say: "I know this Anna!" "Now," he will say, "lead her forth into Paradise. May she there find peace. . . . I know her life was wearisome . . . she is very tired . . . let her have rest, our Anna."

Anna. Grandfather . . . you, my dear . . . if only it is so . . . if I there . . . find peace . . . and feel nothing more. . . .

Luka. You will suffer nothing . . . nothing! Only have faith! Die joyfully, without anxiety . . . Death to us, I say unto you, is like a mother soothing her children. . . .

Anna. But . . . perhaps . . . I will get well again?

Luka. [*Laughing.*] For what? To fresh tortures?

Anna. But I might still . . . live a little while . . . a very little while . . . if there is no torture beyond . . . I can afford to suffer at the end here a little more. . . .

Luka. There shall be no more pain . . . none at all.

Pepel. [*Rising.*] True—it may be, and may not be!

Anna. Ah, God. . . .

Luka. Ah, my dear boy. . . .

Medviedeff. Who is howling there?

Pepel. [*Going to him.*] Me, what's the matter?

Medviedeff. People must keep quiet in here. . . . You have no cause for howling.

Pepel. Ah . . . blockhead! And you her uncle . . . ha, ha!

Luka. [*Whispers to* PEPEL.] Listen, boy—not so loud. A woman is dying here. . . . Her lips are covered with earth already . . . don't disturb her. . . .

Pepel. As you say so, grandfather, I will listen to you. You are a splendid chap, pilgrim . . . you tell them famously . . . you're full of nice stories. Keep it up, brother, keep it up . . . there is so little pleasure in the world.

Bubnoff. Is she dying for keeps?

Luka. I guess she is not fooling.

Bubnoff. Then we will finally be rid of that coughing . . . a great nuisance, her everlasting coughing . . . I take two. . . .

Medviedeff. Ah, . . . the devil take you.

Pepel. Abram. . . .

Medviedeff. I am not Abram . . . for you.

Pepel. Abrashka, tell me—is Natasha still sick?

Medviedeff. Does that concern you?

Pepel. No, but say: did Wassilissa really beat her up so badly?

Medviedeff. And that's none of your business either . . . that's a family affair . . . who are you, anyhow, eh?

Pepel. I may be who I am—but when it suits me, I will take your Natasha away. You will not see her again.

Medviedeff. [*Interrupting his playing.*] What do you say? Whom are you talking about? My niece shall . . . ach, you thief!

Pepel. A thief—that you have not yet caught. . . .

Medviedeff. Wait! I'll soon catch you . . . in a very little while I will have you. . . .

Pepel. Whenever it suits you . . . and then your whole nest here will be torn up. Do you think I'll hold my tongue when it comes to the coroner? There you're badly mistaken. Who incited you to theft, they will ask—who put the opportunity before you? Mischka Kostilioff and his wife. And who received the stolen goods? Mischka Kostilioff and his wife.

Medviedeff. You lie! Nobody will believe it.

Pepel. They will quickly believe—because it is the truth. And I'll get you into the muddle too, and the rest of you, you gang of thieves—we shall soon see.

Medviedeff. [*Uneasily.*] Shut up! Shut up! What have I done to you . . . you mad dog.

Pepel. What good have you done me?

Luka. Quite right. . . .

Medviedeff. [*To* LUKA.] What are you croaking about? What business is this of yours? This is a family affair. . . .

Bubnoff. [*To* LUKA.] Let them have it out. . . . We two won't be haltered anyhow. . . .

Luka. [*Softly.*] I have done no harm. I only think that if a man does not do another good—then he has done wrong.

Medviedeff. [*Who does not understand* LUKA.] Look, you. We are all acquainted

here. . . . And you—who are you? [*Exit quickly L. U. E. angrily fuming.*]

Luka. He has gone mad, Sir Cavalier . . . oho! Very peculiar, brothers, what we have here, somewhat complicated.

Pepel. He has gone to Wassilissa, now, with it.

Bubnoff. Don't make a fool of yourself, Wassili. Don't try to be the bravest. Bravery my boy, is good, when you go into the woods for mushrooms. . . . It is out of place here . . . they have you by the throat . . . in a jiffy.

Pepel. We shall see. . . . We Yaroslavs are much too sly . . . we cannot be caught with the bare hands . . . will you have a fight . . . good, then we begin it. . . .

Luka. It would indeed be better, boy, to go away. . . .

Pepel. Where then? Tell me. . . .

Luka. Go . . . to Siberia.

Pepel. Ha! Ha! Never; I'd rather wait until they send me, at the expense of the government. . . .

Luka. No, really, listen to me! Go there; you can make your way in Siberia . . . they need such young fellows. . . .

Pepel. My way is already pointed out! My father spent his life in prison, and that fate is my legacy . . . when I was still a small boy they called me a thief and the son of a thief.

Luka. A beautiful country, Siberia. A golden land. A man with strength and a clear head develops there . . . like a cucumber in a hot bed.

Pepel. Tell me, pilgrim, why do you fabricate so ceaselessly?

Luka. How?

Pepel. Are you deaf? Why do you lie, I ask. . . .

Luka. When have I lied?

Pepel. Right straight along. . . . It is beautiful there, by your way of thinking, and beautiful here . . . which is not true. Why, then, do you lie?

Luka. Believe me! Or go there and convince yourself. . . . You will send me thanks . . . why loiter here? And, from whence comes your eagerness for truth? Think it over: the truth is, they may make an end of you here.

Pepel. It is all the same . . . even a halter.

Luka. You are a strange fellow. Why will you put your head into it?

Bubnoff. What are you two jawing about? I don't catch on. . . . What kind of truth do you want, Waska? What good would it be to you? You know the truth about yourself . . . and all the world knows it. . . .

Pepel. Hold your snout. Don't croak. He shall tell me first . . . hear, pilgrim . . . is there a God? [Luka *laughs and remains silent.*]

Bubnoff. Mankind is like chips which the storm sweeps away . . . the finished house remains, but the chips are gone.

Luka. [*Softly.*] If you believe in him, there is a God; believe not and none exists. . . . What you believe in . . . exists . . .

[Pepel *looks silently surprised at the old man.*]

Bubnoff. I'll have a drink of tea now . . . come with me to the ale house.

Luka. [*To* Pepel.] What are you staring at?

Pepel. It means then . . . just so . . . wait.

Bubnoff. Nyah, then I'll go alone. [*Exit L. U. E., bumping into* Wassilissa.]

Pepel. Then . . . do as you . . . then you . . .

Wassilissa. [*To* Bubnoff.) Is Nastassja at home?

Bubnoff. No . . . [*Exit L. U. E.*]

Pepel. Ah . . . there she is.

Wassilissa. [*Goes to* Anna's *bed.*] Is she still alive?

Luka. Do not disturb her.

Wassilissa. And you, what are you loafing around for?

Luka. I can go out, if I must. . . .

Wassilissa. [*Approaching* Pepel's *door.*] Wassili! I have business with you . . . [Luka *goes to the door, L. U. E., opens it, closes it noisily, then carefully climbs up the stove and conceals himself.* Wassilissa *has entered* Pepel's *room. Within.*] Wassili, come here.

Pepel. I will not come . . . I will not. . . .

Wassilissa. [*Re-enters.*] What's the matter? Why are you so mad?

Pepel. It is tiresome. . . . I am sick of the whole mess here. . . .

Wassilissa. And me, are you sick . . . of me, too?

Pepel. You too. . . . [Wassilissa *pulls the shawl which is over her shoulders closely together and presses her arm against her breast. She goes to* Anna's *bed, looks cautiously behind the curtain, and returns to* Pepel.] Nyah, so . . . speak. . . .

Wassilissa. What shall I say? No one can be forced to love . . . and I should be unlike myself to beg for love . . . for your frankness many thanks. . . .

Pepel. My frankness?

Wassilissa. Yes, you say you are sick of me . . . or is it not true? [PEPEL *looks at her in silence. She approaches him.*] Why do you stare? Do you not know me?

Pepel. [*With a deep breath.*] You are beautiful, Waska. [WASSILISSA *puts her arm around his neck: he shakes it off with a movement of the shoulder.*] But still my heart has never belonged to you. . . . I have gone on living with you . . . but I have never truly liked you. . . .

Wassilissa. [*Softly.*] So . . . o . . . now . . . um. . . .

Pepel. Now we have nothing more to talk about. . . . Nothing more . . . go away . . . leave me alone.

Wassilissa. Have you found pleasure in another?

Pepel. That is nothing to you. . . . If it were so—I would not take you along for a matchmaker. . . .

Wassilissa. [*Meaningly.*] Who knows . . . perhaps I can bring it about.

Pepel. [*Suspiciously.*] Who with?

Wassilissa. You know who I mean . . . don't deny it. . . . I talk straight out from the shoulder . . . [*Softly.*] I will only say . . . you have deeply wronged me . . . without provocation you have struck me a blow, as with a club . . . you always said you loved me, and . . . all of a sudden. . . .

Pepel. All of a sudden . . . not at all. . . . I have thought so, long . . . you have no soul . . . In a woman there should be a soul. We men are animals . . . we know nothing else . . . and men must first be taught goodness . . . and you, what good have you taught me? . . .

Wassilissa. What has been has been. . . . I know that we cannot control the impulses of our hearts . . . if you love me no more—good . . . it is all the same to me.

Pepel. All right, then. It is settled. We separate in friendship, without scandal . . . pleasantly!

Wassilissa. Stop, not so quick. During the whole time that we have lived together . . . I have always hoped you would help me out of this cesspool here . . . that you would free me from my husband, from my uncle . . . from this whole life . . . and perhaps I have not loved you, Waska, at all . . . perhaps in you I love only . . . my one hope, my one dream . . . do you understand? I had hoped you would pull me out. . . .

Pepel. You are no nail and I am no tongs . . . I had thought you would finish him; with your slyness . . . for you are sly and quick-witted . . . [*Sits at R. table.*]

Wassilissa. [*Leans towards him.*] Waska, we will help each other. . . .

Pepel. How then?

Wassilissa. [*In a low tone, with expression.*] My sister . . . you have taken a fancy to her, I know it. . . .

Pepel. And you knock her about so brutally on that account. I'll say this to you, Waska: don't touch her again.

Wassilissa. Wait. Not so hotly. It can all be done quietly, in friendliness. . . . Marry her whenever you feel like it. I'll find the money, three hundred rubles. If I can get more I'll give you more. . . .

Pepel. [*Rocks on his seat back and forth.*] Hold on . . . How do you mean that? What for?

Wassilissa. Free me from my husband. Take that halter from my neck. . . .

Pepel. [*Whistles.*] Oho, I se-e! You have thought it out well . . . the husband in his grave, the admirer in Siberia, and you yourself. . . .

Wassilissa. But Waska, why Siberia? Not you yourself . . . your comrades. And even if you did do it yourself—who would know? Think . . . Natasha thine. . . . You shall have money . . . to go away . . . anywhere . . . you free me forever . . . and for my sister too; it will be a good thing for her to be away from me. I can't look at her without getting furious. . . . I hate her on your account . . . I cannot control myself . . . I give her such blows that I myself cry for pity . . . but—I strike her just the same. And I will go on with it.

Pepel. Beast! Don't sing praises of your own cruelty.

Wassilissa. I am not praising myself. I only speak the truth. Remember, Waska, you have already been imprisoned twice by my husband . . . when you could not satisfy his greed. . . . He sticks to me like vermin . . . for four years he has fed on me. Such a man for a husband! And Natasha dreads him too. He oppresses her and calls her a beggar. He is a poison, a rank poison for us all. . . .

Pepel. How cleverly you contrive it all. . . .

Wassilissa. What I have said is not contrived . . . It is quite clear to you. . . . Only a fool could not comprehend. . . .

[KOSTILIOFF *enters warily, L. U. E., and sneaks forward.*]

Pepel. [*To* WASSILISSA.] No . . . go away!

Wassilissa. Think it over. [*Sees her husband.*] What's this! Dogging me again?

[PEPEL *springs up and looks wildly at* KOSTILIOFF.]

Kostilioff. Indeed . . . it is I . . . it is I . . . and you are quite alone here? Ah . . . ah . . . Been chatting for a spell? [*Suddenly stamps his feet and screeches aloud, to* WASSILISSA.] Waska; you baggage . . . you beggar, you deceptive carrion. [*Then frightened by his own cry which is answered only by an echoless silence.*] Have mercy on me, Lord . . . You have again led me to sin, Wassilissa . . . I search for you everywhere . . . [*Squeakingly.*] It is time to go to bed. Have you forgot to fill the holy lamp? . . . ah, you beggar, you swine!

[*Waves his hands tremblingly in her face.* WASSILISSA *goes slowly to the door, L. U. E., and looks back at* PEPEL.]

Pepel. [*To* KOSTILIOFF.] You! Go your own way. Get out. . . .

Kostilioff. [*Cries.*] I am the master here: Get out yourself, understand? Thief!

Pepel. [*Sternly.*] Go your own way, Mischka. . . .

Kostilioff. Be careful! Or else I'll . . .

[PEPEL *seizes him by the collar and shakes him. A noise of turning and yawning is heard on the stove.* PEPEL *loosens* KOSTILIOFF, *who, crying loudly, goes out R. U. E. up the stairs.*]

Pepel. [*Jumps on bunk before stove.*] Who is there? Who is on the stove?

Luka. [*Poking his head out.*] What?

Pepel. Is it you?

Luka. [*Composedly.*] I . . . I myself . . . Who else would it be? . . . Ah, my God!

Pepel. [*Closes door L. U. E., looks for key, but does not find it.*] The devil . . . crawl down, pilgrim.

Luka. All right . . . I'll crawl down. . . .

Pepel. [*Roughly.*] Why did you climb up on the stove?

Luka. Where should I go?

Pepel. Why didn't you go out into the entry?

Luka. Too cold, little brother . . . I am an old man. . . .

Pepel. Did you hear?

Luka. Without any trouble. Why not? I am not deaf. Ah, my boy, you are lucky, truly lucky.

Pepel. [*Mistrustfully.*] I am lucky? How so?

Luka. Because . . . I climbed up on the stove . . . that was your luck. . . .

Pepel. Why did you move about?

Luka. Because I felt hot . . . luckily for you, my orphan . . . and then I thought: if the boy does not lose his head . . . and strangle the old man. . . .

Pepel. Yes, I might easily have done it . . . I hate him. . . .

Luka. It would not have been any wonder . . . such things happen every day.

Pepel. [*Laughing.*] Mm. . . . Have you yourself not done something of the kind some time?

Luka. Listen, my boy, to what I tell you: this woman, keep well away from her. At no cost let her approach . . . She will soon get her husband out of the way more cleverly than you could ever manage it. Don't listen to her, this offspring of Satan! Look at me: not a hair left on my head . . . and why? The women, and no other reason. . . . I have known. perhaps, more women than I have had hairs on my head . . . and this Wassilissa . . . is worse than the pest. . . .

Pepel. I don't know . . . whether to thank you . . . or, are you too . . .

Luka. Say no more . . . Listen. If there is a girl, take the one you like best—take her by the hand and go away together; quite away, a long way off. . . .

Pepel. [*Gloomily.*] We cannot know each other: who is good, who is bad. . . . Nothing certain is known to us. . . .

Luka. Of what importance can that be? Man's ways vary . . . following the different desires of his heart; so he lives, good today, bad tomorrow. And if you love the girl, then pull out, settle it. Or go alone. You are young, you have still time enough to be enmeshed by a woman.

Pepel. [*Takes him by the shoulder.*] No, but say—why do you tell me all this? . . .

Luka. Hold on. Let me go . . . I must look after Anna. . . . Her throat is rattling. [*He goes to* ANNA'S *bed, strikes the curtain back, looks at the prostrate form and touches it with his hand.* PEPEL, *uneasy and depressed, follows him.*] Lord Jesus Christ, All Powerful! receive in peace the soul of this newcomer, thy servant Anna. . . .

Pepel. [*Whispers.*] Is she dead?

[*Elevates himself to his full height and looks without approaching.*]

Luka. [*Whispering.*] Her misery is ended. And where is her husband?

Pepel. In the barroom—of course.

Luka. He must be told. . . .

Pepel. [*Shrinking.*] I do not love the dead.

Luka. [*Goes to the door, L. U. E.*] Why should we love the dead? We must love the living . . . the living. . . .

Pepel. I'll go with you.

Luka. Are you afraid?

Pepel. I love them not. . . . [*Exit hastily, with* Luka, *L. U. E. The stage remains empty for a few moments. Behind the door, L. U. E., is heard a dull, confused, unusual sound.*]

[*Enter the* Actor, *L. U. E. He remains standing on the platform, his hand on the door jamb, and cries.*]

Actor. Old man! Luka! Heh, where do you hide? Now I remember. Listen. [*Tremblingly takes two steps forward, puts himself in an attitude and declaims.*]

And if humanity to holy truth
No path by searching finds,
Then all the world shall praise the fool,
Who spins a dream to mesh their minds.

[Natasha *appears behind the* Actor *in the door.*]

[*He continues.*] Old man. . . . listen!

And if the sun tomorrow shall forget
Upon the earth his light to stream,
Then all the world shall hail the fool,
With his illuminating red-gold dream.

Natasha. [*Laughs.*] Look at the scarecrow. Maybe he has had one or two. . . .

Actor. [*Turns to her.*] A-ah, it is you! And where is our patriarch? Our loving, kind-hearted pilgrim. . . . There is nobody . . . at home. . . . Natasha, farewell, farewell.

Natasha. [*Approaches him.*] You have just greeted me, and now you say farewell.

Actor. [*Steps in her way.*] I shall go. . . . I shall travel . . . when, soon as spring comes, I shall be far away.

Natasha. Let me by. . . . Where shall you travel then?

Actor. I shall go to that city . . . I shall be cured. . . . You must leave here, too . . . Ophelia . . . get thee to a nunnery. . . . There is, you know, a hospital for organisms . . . for hard drinkers, so to speak . . . a splendid hospital . . . all marble . . . marble floors . . . light . . . cleanliness . . . good board—all free of charge! And marble floors, truly. I shall find it, this city, I'll be myself again. . . . Begin a new life. . . . I am on the way to regeneration . . . as King Lear said! Do you know too, Natasha . . . what my stage name is? Svertchkoff-Savolszhinski I'm called . . . nobody knows that here, nobody . . . here I am nameless . . . realize, if you can, how it hurts to lose your name! Even dogs have their names. [Natasha *goes softly past the* Actor, *stands at* Anna's *bed and looks at the dead body.*] Without a name . . . where there is no name there is no man.

Natasha. Look! . . . dear . . . why . . . she is dead. . . .

Actor. [*Shaking his head.*] Impossible. . . .

Natasha. [*Stands aside.*] In God's name . . . look. . . .

Bubnoff. [*Enters L. U. E.*] What is there to look at?

Natasha. Anna is dead!

Bubnoff. Then there will be no more coughing. [*Goes to* Anna's *bed, looks for a time at the dead body and then goes to his place.*] Somebody must tell Kleshtsch . . . it's his business. . . .

Actor. I'll go. I shall tell him . . . She, too, has lost her name. [*Exit L. U. E.*]

Natasha. [*In the centre of the room, to herself partly.*] And I . . . some time, shall languish so, and die forsaken in a cellar. . . .

Bubnoff. [*Spreading out an old torn blanket on his shelf.*] What is the matter . . . what are you muttering?

Natasha. Nothing . . . only to myself. . . .

Bubnoff. Are you expecting Waska? Be careful with Waska. . . . He will knock your skull in, some day, for you. . . .

Natasha. Isn't it all the same to me, who knocks it in? I'd rather have it done by him. . . .

Bubnoff. [*Lies down.*] As you prefer . . . no funeral of mine.

Natasha. It is the best thing for her that could happen . . . to die . . . yet it is pitiful . . . thou loving Master . . . what did she live for?

Bubnoff. So with everybody—but, we live. Man is born, lives for a space of time, and dies. I will die too . . . and you will die . . . why pity the dead, then?

[Luka, *the* Tartar, Krivoi Zoba *and* Kleshtsch *enter L. U. E.* Kleshtsch *follows behind the others in shaking spirits.*]

Natasha. Sh-sh . . . Anna!

Krivoi Zoba. We have already heard . . . God take her soul. . . .

Tartar. [*To* KLESHTSCH.] She must be taken out. She must be carried into the entry. This is no place for the dead. The living person can have a bed. . . .

Kleshtsch. [*Whispering.*] We will take her out. . . .

[*All stand around the body.* KLESHTSCH *looks at the remains of his wife over the shoulders of the others.*]

Krivoi Zoba. [*To the* TARTAR.] Do you think she will smell? No . . . while she was still alive she dried up. . . .

Natasha. For God's sake . . . nobody pities her . . . if anybody had but said a word of kindness.

Luka. Don't be hurt, my daughter. It is nothing. What have we to do with pitying the dead? We have not enough for each other. And you talk of pitying her.

Bubnoff. [*Gapes.*] Why waste words . . . when she is dead—no words can help her any more . . . against sickness certain words can be used . . . against death, nothing.

Tartar. [*Stepping aside.*] The police must be told. . . .

Krivoi Zoba. Naturally—that is the regulation. Kleshtsch, have you already reported it?

Kleshtsch. No . . . now comes the funeral and I have only forty kopecs in the world. . . .

Krivoi Zoba. Then borrow . . . or we will take up a collection . . . everybody give what he can, one five copecs, another ten . . . but the police must soon be told. Or else, at last, they will think you have beaten your wife to death . . . or something else. [*Goes to the bunk, U. on which the* TARTAR *is lying, and attempts to lie down with him.*]

Natasha. [*Goes to* BUBNOFF'S *bench.*] Now I shall dream about her . . . I always dream of the dead. . . . I am afraid to be alone. . . . It is so dark in the entry.

Luka. [*Follows with his eyes.*] Be afraid of the living . . . that is what I say to you. . . .

Natasha. Take me up-stairs, daddy. . . .

Luka. Come . . . come . . . I will go with you. [*Exit both L. U. E. Pause.*]

Krivoi Zoba. [*Yawns.*] Oh, oh! [*To the* TARTAR.] It will soon be spring now, Hassan. . . . Then there will be a little bit of sun for you and me. The peasants now are repairing their plows and harrows . . . they will go to the field soon . . . hm—yes . . . and we, Hassan. He is already snoring, cursed Mohammedan.

Bubnoff. The Tartars are fond of sleep.

Kleshtsch. [*Standing in the middle of the room staring stupidly before himself.*] What shall I begin to do now?

Krivoi Zoba. Lie down and sleep . . . that's all. . . .

Kleshtsch. [*Whispers.*] And . . . she! What shall be done with her? [*Nobody answers him.*]

[*Enter* SAHTIN *and the* ACTOR, *L. U. E.*]

Actor. [*Cries.*] Old man! My true adviser. . . .

Sahtin. Miklucka-Maclai comes . . . ho, ho!

Actor. The thing is settled! Patriarch, where is the city . . . where are you?

Sahtin. Fata Morgana! He has deluded you . . . there are no cities . . . No, no people . . . there is nothing at all!

Actor. Liar. . . .

Tartar. [*Springing up.*] Where is the proprietor? I'll see the proprietor! If we can't sleep here, he shall charge us nothing . . . the dead . . . the drunken. . . . [*Exit quickly, R. U. E.* SAHTIN *whistles after him.*]

Bubnoff. [*Awakened.*] Go to bed, brats, make no noise, the night is for sleep. . . .

Actor. True . . . I have here [*rubs his forehead*]. "Our nets have caught the dead," as it says in a . . . chanson, from Beranger.[1]

Sahtin. The dead hear not. The dead feel not. Howl . . . shout as much as you like . . . the dead hear not!

[LUKA *appears in the door.*]

ACT THREE

[*Translator's Note:* In the Russian, the third act takes place upon a new scene, but as the scene of the previous acts may be employed without necessitating any change in dialogue or construction, the stage directions given in this act have the old scene in view. The new scene is described as follows:]

A vacant place between two buildings, filled with rubbish and overgrown with weeds. In the background, a high brick fire-wall, which covers the heavens. Near it a small elder-tree. On the right, a dark wall of reinforced wooden beams, part of a barn or stable. On the left, the gray wall of KOSTILIOFF'S *lodging-house, its rough plaster adhering only in places. This wall runs diag-*

[1] In reality a quotation from Pushkin.

onally, the rear wall of the building, the corner being about the middle of the scene, forming with the fire-wall a narrow passageway. In the gray wall there are two windows, one on a level with the earth, the other four or five feet higher and nearer the rear. Against the gray wall lies a great sled, overturned, with a beam about three yards long. Near the stable wall on the right is a heap of old boards and hewn beams.

It is evening, the setting sun throws a red light against the fire-wall. Spring has just begun and the snow is scarcely melted. The black twigs of the elder-tree have not begun to swell.

On the beam, side by side, sit NATASHA *and* NASTIAH. *On the pile of boards* LUKA *and the* BARON. KLESHTSCH *lies on a heap of wood near the right wall.* BUBNOFF *is looking out of the lower window.*

Nastiah. [*With closed eyes, moving her head in time to the story, which she is telling in a singsong voice.*] In the night, then, he came to the garden, to the summer-bower, as we had arranged . . . I had waited long, trembling for fear and grief . . . and he, too, was trembling from head to foot, and chalk white, but in his hand he held a . . . pistol. . . .

Natasha. [*Nibbling at sunflower seeds.*] *Just* listen . . . these students are all as mad as March hares.

Nastiah. And in a terrible voice, he said to me: my true love. . . .

Bubnoff. Ha, ha, my "true" love, did he say?

Baron. Be still there, let her humbug in peace—you don't have to listen, if it don't please you . . . go on.

Nastiah. My heart's distraction, said he, my golden treasure; my parents refuse to allow me, said he, to marry you, and threaten me with their curses if I do not give you up, and so I must, said he, take my life . . . and his pistol was frightfully large, and loaded with ten bullets. . . . Farewell, said he, true friend of my heart! My decision is irrevocable . . . I cannot live without you. But I answered him, my never-to-be-forgotten friend . . . my Raoul. . . .

Bubnoff. [*Astonished.*] What's his name . . . Graul?

Baron. You are mistaken, Nastya! The last time you called him Gaston.

Nastiah. [*Springing up.*] Silence! You vagabond curs! Can you understand what love is . . . real, genuine love! And I . . . I have tasted this genuine love. [*To the* BARON.] You unworthy scamp . . . You were an educated man . . . you say, have drunk your coffee in bed. . . .

Luka. Have patience! Don't scold her! Show human beings some consideration. . . . It is not what man says but why he says it,—that's the point. Keep on, my love—they don't mean anything.

Bubnoff. Always laying on the bright hues, raven . . . Nyah, cut loose again!

Baron. Go on.

Natasha. Pay no attention to them . . . who are they, anyway? They only speak out of envy . . . because they have nothing to tell about themselves . . .

Nastiah. [*Sits down again.*] I don't want to . . . I won't tell anything more . . . if they don't like to believe it . . . and laugh about it. [*Suddenly brightens up. Is silent a few seconds, closes her eyes again and begins in a loud and rapid voice, keeping time with her hand, while in the distance ringing music is heard.*] And I answered him: Joy of my life! O my glittering star! Without you, I too, could not live . . . because I love you madly and must love you always, as long as my heart beats in my bosom! But, said I, rob yourself not of your young life . . . for look, your dear parents whose single joy you are—they stand in need of you. Give me up . . . I would rather pine away . . . out of longing for you, my love . . . I am—alone . . . I am—wholly yours . . . yes, let me die . . . what matters it . . . I am good for nothing . . . and have nothing . . . absolutely nothing . . . [*Covers her face with her hands and cries softly.*]

Natasha. [*Goes to her side, quietly.*] Don't.

[LUKA *strokes* NASTIAH'S *head, laughing.*]

Bubnoff. [*Laughs aloud.*] Oh . . . ho . . . a deceiving minx, . . . eh?

Baron. [*Laughs aloud.*] Now—grandfather—do you believe what she tells? She gets it all out of her book . . . out of "Disastrous Love," all nonsense. Drop it.

Natasha. What is that to you? You'd better keep still. God has punished you enough. . . .

Nastiah. [*Furious.*] You! Tell us, where is your soul!

Luka. [*Takes her by the hand.*] Come, my love. Do not be angry . . . They mean nothing, I know . . . I—believe you. You are right, and not they . . . if you yourself believe

it, then you have had just such true love . . . Certainly, quite certainly. And he there, your lover, don't be angry. . . . He only laughs perhaps . . . about it . . . because he is envious . . . No doubt in his whole life he never felt anything genuine . . . No, certainly not. Come!

Nastiah. [*Presses her arm against her breast.*] Grandfather. Before God . . . it is true! It is all true. . . . A French student . . . Gastoscha was his name . . . and he had a little black beard . . . he always wore patent leather shoes. . . . May lightning strike me instantly if it isn't true! And how he loved me . . . oh, how he loved me.

Luka. I am sure. Say no more. I believe you. He wore patent leather shoes, you say? Aye, aye, and you have naturally loved him too. [*Exit both L. U. E.*]

Baron. A stupid thing, good hearted but stupid, intolerably stupid.

Bubnoff. How can a man lie so unceasingly? Just like before a coroner.

Natasha. Falsehood must indeed be pleasanter than the truth . . . I . . . too.

Baron. What "I too?" Say more.

Natasha. I too, think of lots of them . . . to myself . . . and wait. . . .

Baron. For what?

Natasha. [*Laughing embarrassed.*] Just so . . . perhaps, think I . . . somebody will come tomorrow . . . some strange person . . . or there may happen . . . something that never happened before. . . . I have already waited long . . . I still am waiting . . . and after all . . . to look at it right . . . can anything great be expected? [*Pause.*]

Baron. [*Laughing.*] We can expect nothing at all. . . . I least of all—I expect nothing more. For me everything has already been. All is past . . . at an end . . . what more?

Natasha. Sometimes, too, I imagine, that tomorrow . . . I will die suddenly . . . which fills me with fear. . . . In summer we think willingly of death . . . then comes the storm, and every moment one may be struck by lightning. . . .

Baron. Your life has not been laid in easy lines. . . . Your sister has the disposition of a fiend.

Natasha. Whose life is easy? All have it hard, as far as I can see. . . .

Kleshtsch. [*Who has previously lain silent and motionless, springing up.*] All? That is not true! Not all! If it was hard for all . . . then each of us could stand it . . . there would be nothing to complain about.

Bubnoff. Say, are you possessed by the devil? Why howl?

[Kleshtsch *lies down again and stares vacantly.*]

Baron. I must see what Nastya is doing . . . I'll have to make up with her . . . or we shall have no more money for whiskey.

Bubnoff. People can never stop lying! I can understand Nastya; she is accustomed to painting her cheeks. . . . So she tries it with the soul . . . paints her little soul red . . . but the rest, why do they do it? Luka, for example . . . turns everything into stories . . . without ceremony . . . why does he always lie? . . . at his age? . . .

Baron. [*Goes L. U. E. laughing.*] All of us have gray souls. . . . We like to lay on a bit of red.

Luka. [*Enters from L. U. E.*] Tell me, Baron, why do you torment the girl? Let her alone. . . . Can't she cry to pass the time away . . . she only sheds tears for pleasure . . . what harm can that do you?

Baron. She is a soft-brained thing, pilgrim. . . . It's hard to swallow . . . today Raoul, tomorrow Gaston . . . and everlastingly one and the same. But anyway, I'll make up with her again. [*Exit L. U. E.*]

Luka. Go, treat her with friendliness . . . treat every one with friendliness—injure no one.

Natasha. How good you are, grandfather . . . how is it that you are so good?

Luka. I am good, you say. Nyah . . . if it is true, all right. . . . [*Behind the red wall is heard soft singing and accordion playing.*] But you see, my girl—there must be some one to be good. . . . We must have pity on mankind. Christ, remember, had pity for us all and so taught us to be likewise. Have pity when there is still time, believe me, it is very good. I was once, for example, employed as a watchman, at a country place which belonged to an engineer, not far from the city of Tomsk, in Siberia. The house stood in the middle of the forest, an out-of-the-way location . . . and it was winter and I was all alone in the country house. . . . It was beautiful there . . . magnificent! And once . . . I heard them scrambling up!

Natasha. Thieves!

Luka. Yes. They crept higher and I took my rifle and went outside. I looked up: two

men . . . as they were opening a window and so busy that they did not see anything of me at all . . . I cried to them: Heh there . . . get out of that . . . and would you think it, they fell on me with a hand ax . . . I warned them—Halt, I cried, or else I fire . . . then I aimed first at one and then at the other. They fell on their knees saying, pardon us. I was pretty hot . . . on account of the hand ax, you remember. You devils, I cried, I told you to clear out and you didn't . . . and now, I said, one of you go into the brush and get a switch. It was done: And now, I commanded, one of you stretch out on the ground, and the other thrash him . . . and so they whipped each other at my command. And when they had each had a sound beating, they said to me: Grandfather, said they, for the sake of Christ give us a piece of bread. We haven't a bite in our bodies. These, my daughter, were the thieves [*laughs*] who had fallen upon me with the hand ax. Yes . . . they were a pair of splendid fellows. . . . I said to them: If only you had asked for bread! Then they answered: We had gotten past that . . . we had asked and asked and nobody would give us anything . . . endurance was worn out . . . nyah, and so they remained with me the whole winter. One of them, Stephen by name, liked to take the rifle and go into the woods . . . and the other, Jakoff, was constantly ill, always coughing . . . the three of us watched the place, and when spring came, they said farewell, grandfather, and went away—to Russia. . . .

Natasha. Were they convicts, escaping?

Luka. They were . . . fugitives . . . they had left their colony . . . a pair of splendid fellows. . . . If I had not had pity on them—who knows what would have happened. They might have killed me. . . . Then they would be taken to court again, put in prison, sent back to Siberia . . . why all that? You learn nothing good in prison, nor in Siberia . . . but a man, what can he not learn? Man may teach his fellowman something good . . . very simply. [*Pause.*]

Bubnoff. Hm . . . yes . . . and I . . . can never lie. Why should I do it? Always out with the truth, that is my way of thinking, whether it pleases or not. Why trouble to be considerate?

Kleshtsch. [*Springing up, as though stabbed, crying.*] What is the truth? Where is the truth—where! [*Beats with his hands on his torn clothes.*] There is the truth—there! No work. . . . No strength . . . in the limbs—that is the truth! No shelter . . . no shelter. . . . It is time to die, that is your truth, curse it! What is it to me, this—truth? Only let me sigh in peace—let me sigh. What have I done? Why the devil should we have truth? Curse it, we can't live . . . that is the truth!

Bubnoff. Just listen . . . he is full of matter. . . .

Luka. The good Lord . . . but say, my friend, you. . . .

Kleshtsch. [*Trembling with excitement.*] I have heard you talk of the truth. You, pilgrim—you consoling every one . . . and I say to you: I hate every one. And this truth too, this accursed truth . . . do you understand? Mark you, accursed shall truth be. [*Hurries out, L. U. E., looking back as he goes.*]

Luka. Aye, aye, aye; but he is out of his head . . . and where can he be running?

Natasha. He rages away like one gone mad.

Bubnoff. He laid it all down in the proper order . . . as in a theatre . . . the same thing happens often . . . he is not accustomed to life. . . .

Pepel. [*Enters slowly L. U. E.*] Peace to you honest folks! Nyah, Luka, old devil—telling more stories?

Luka. You ought to have seen just now, a man crying out.

Pepel. Kleshtsch, you mean, him? What is the matter with him now? He ran past me, as if he were crazy. . . .

Luka. You will run the same way too, when once it gets into your heart. . . .

Pepel. [*Sits.*] I can't endure him . . . he is embittered, and proud. [*He imitates* KLESHTSCH.] "I am a workingman . . ." as though others were inferior to him . . . Work indeed, if it gives you pleasure . . . but why do you need to be so proud about it? If you estimate men by work, then a horse is better than any man. He pulls a wagon—and holds his mouth about it. Natasha . . . are your people at home?

Natasha. They have gone to the graveyard . . . and then they were to go to church.

Pepel. You're therefore at leisure . . . that happens seldom.

Luka. [*Thoughtfully to* BUBNOFF] You say—the truth . . . but the truth is not a cure for every ill . . . you cannot always heal the soul with truth . . . for example, the following

case: I knew a man who believed in the land of justice. . . .

Bubnoff. In wh–at?

Luka. In the land of justice. There must be, said he, a land of justice somewhere in the world . . . in which unusual men, so to speak, must live . . . good men, who respect each other, who help each other when they can . . . everything there is good and beautiful. It is a country which every man should seek. . . . He was poor and things went bad with him . . . so bad, indeed, that soon nothing remained for him to do but to lie down and die—but still he did not lose courage. He often laughed and said to himself: it makes no difference—I can bear it! A little longer yet will I wait—then throw this life aside and go into the land of justice . . . it was his only pleasure . . . this land of justice. . . .

Pepel. Yes, and . . . has he gone there?

Bubnoff. Where! Ha, ha, ha!

Luka. At that time there was brought to the place—the thing happened in Siberia—an exile, a man of learning . . . with books and maps and all sorts of arts . . . And the sick man spoke to the sage: Tell me, I implore you, where lies the land of justice, and how can one succeed in getting there. Then the learned man opened his books and spread his maps out, and searched and searched, but he found the land of justice nowhere. Everything else was correct, all countries were shown—the land of justice alone did not appear.

Pepel. [*Softly.*] No? Was it really not there? [Bubnoff *laughs.*]

Natasha. What are you laughing at? Go on, grandfather.

Luka. The man would not believe him. . . . It must be there, said he . . . look more closely! For all your books and maps, said he, are not worth a whistle if the land of justice is not shown on them. The learned man felt himself insulted. My maps, said he, are absolutely correct, and a land of justice nowhere exists. So, the other was furious. What, he cried—have I now lived and lived and lived, endured and endured, and always believed there was such a country. And according to your plans there is none! That is robbery . . . and he said to the learned man: You good-for-nothing scamp . . . you are a cheat and no sage. Then he gave him a sound blow over the skull, and still another. . . . [*Is silent a few moments.*] And then he went home and choked himself . . .

[*All are silent.* Luka *looks silently at* Pepel *and* Natasha.]

Pepel. The devil take him . . . the story is it not cheerful. . . .

Natasha. He couldn't stand it . . . to be so disappointed.

Bubnoff. [*In a surly tone.*] All tales. . . .

Pepel. Hm, yes . . . there is your land of justice . . . it was not to be found, it seems. . . .

Natasha. One should have sympathy for him . . . the poor man. . . .

Bubnoff. All imagination . . . ha, ha! The land of justice—stuff! Ha, ha, ha, ha! [*Exit into kitchen.*]

Luka. [*Looking after him.*] He laughs, ah yes. [*Pause.*] Yes, children . . . farewell . . . I shall leave you soon. . . .

Pepel. Where do you journey, then?

Luka. To Little Russia. . . . I hear they have discovered a new religion there. . . . I will see what it is . . . yes. . . . Men search and search, always looking for something better . . . may God give them patience.

Pepel. Think you, they will find it?

Luka. Who? Mankind? Certainly they shall find it. . . . He who yearns . . . he finds . . . who searches zealously—he finds!

Natasha. I wish them a happy journey. I hope they will find something.

Luka. That shall they surely do. But we must help them, my daughter . . . must respect them. . . .

Natasha. How shall I help them? I am myself . . . so helpless. . . .

Pepel. [*Restrained.*] Listen to me, Natasha . . . I want to speak to you . . . in his presence . . . he knows it . . . come . . . with me!

Natasha. Where? To prison?

Pepel. I have already told you that I will give up stealing. By God, I will! When I say a thing, I keep my word. I have learned to read and write . . . I can easily make a living. [*With a movement of the hand towards* Luka.] He advised me—to try it in Siberia . . . to go of my own accord. . . . How does it strike you—shall we go? Believe me, I am sick of this life. Ah, Natasha! I see indeed how things are . . . I have consoled my conscience with the thought that others steal more than I—and are still respected . . . but how does that help me? . . . not in the least. But I have no regret . . . nor, as I believe, any conscience. . . . But I feel one thing: that I must live in a different way. I must live better . . . I must live . . . so that I can respect myself. . . .

Luka. Quite right, my boy. May God be with you. . . . May Christ help you! Well resolved: a man must respect himself. . . .

Pepel. From childhood, I have been—only a thief. . . . Always I was called, Waska, the pickpocket, Waska, the son of a thief! See, it was of no consequence to me, as long as they would have it so . . . so they would have it . . . I was a thief, perhaps, only out of spite . . . because nobody came along to call me anything except—thief. . . . You call me something else, Natasha . . . now?

Natasha. [*In low spirits.*] I do not quite believe it all . . . words are words . . . and then . . . I don't know. . . . Today I am disquieted . . . my heart is despondent. As though I dreaded something. You would not begin today, Wassili. . . .

Pepel. When else, then! This is not the first time I have spoken. . . .

Natasha. Shall I go with you? . . . I love you . . . not too much. . . . Sometimes I like you . . . but then at times I cannot look at you . . . in any case I do not love . . . when one loves, one sees no fault in the beloved . . . and I see faults in you. . . .

Pepel. You will soon love me, have no fear! You will become accustomed to me . . . only say "yes." For over a year I have been watching you, and I see that you are an honest girl . . . a good, true woman . . . I love you with all my heart.

[Wassilissa, *still in gay street dress, appears at the door at the head of the stair, R. U. E. She stands with one hand on the balustrade and the other on the door post and laughs.*]

Natasha. So . . . you love me with all your heart, and my sister. . . .

Pepel. [*Embarrassed.*] What do I care for her? Her kind is nothing. . . .

Luka. It does not matter, my daughter. One eats turnips when he has no bread. . . .

Pepel. [*Gloomily.*] Have pity on me. It is no easy life that I lead—friendless; pursued like a wolf. . . . I sink like a man in a swamp . . . whatever I clutch is slimy and rotten . . . nothing is firm . . . your sister though, would be different . . . if she were not so avaricious . . . I would have risked everything for her . . . If she had only kept faith with me . . . but her heart is set on something else . . . her heart is full of greed . . . and longs for freedom—and only that longing in order to become more dissolute. She cannot help me . . . but you—like a young fir-tree, you are prickly but you give support. . . .

Luka. And I say to you: take him, my daughter, take him. He is a good-hearted boy. All you must do is to remind him often that he is good . . . so that he will not forget it. He will soon believe you. Only say to him, often, Waska, you are a good man . . . don't forget it! Think it over, my love—what else shall you begin? Your sister—she is a bad lot: and of her husband—nothing good can be said either: no words can be found to express his baseness . . . and this whole life here . . . where shall you find a way out? . . . But Waska . . . he is a lusty fellow.

Natasha. I cannot find a way . . . I know that . . . I have already thought it over myself . . . but I . . . whom can I trust? . . . I see no way out. . . .

Pepel. There is but one way . . . but I shall not let you take it . . . I would kill you first. . . .

Natasha. [*Laughing.*] Just look . . . I am not yet your wife, and you will already kill me.

Pepel. [*Putting his arms around her.*] Say "yes," Natasha. It will soon be well. . . .

Natasha. [*Presses him affectionately.*] . . . One thing I will tell you, Wassili. . . . And God shall be my witness: if you strike me a single time . . . or insult me . . . that shall be the end . . . either I hang myself, or . . .

Pepel. May this hand wither up, if I touch you. . . .

Luka. Don't be troubled, my love, you can believe him. You are necessary to his happiness, and he to yours. . . .

Wassilissa. [*From above.*] And the match is made. May God give you love and harmony.

Natasha. They are already back . . . Oh, God! They have seen us . . . ah, Wassili!

Pepel. What are you afraid of? Nobody dares touch you now!

Wassilissa. Do not be afraid, Natalya. He will not strike you. . . . He can neither strike, nor love . . . I know him.

Luka. [*Softly.*] Ah, such a woman . . . a venomous snake. . . .

Wassilissa. He is only bold with words.

Kostilioff. [*Enters R. from kitchen.*] Natschka! What are you doing here, lazy-bones? Gossiping, eh! Complaining about your relatives: the samovar is not in order, the table not cleared off.

Natasha. [*Going R. kitchen.*] You were going to church, I thought. . . .

Kostilioff. It does not concern you what we are going to do. Mind your own business . . . do what you are told.

Pepel. Shut up. She is not your servant now. . . . Natalya, don't budge . . . don't move a finger.

Natasha. It is not for you to give orders here. . . . Too soon yet for orders. [*Exit R.*]

Pepel. [*To* KOSTILIOFF.] Enough of that. You have mortified the poor girl enough! She is mine now.

Kostilioff. You-u? When did you buy her? What did you pay for her?

[WASSILISSA *laughs aloud.*]

Luka. Waska! Get out. . . .

Pepel. You're having a good time over me, aren't you? You may weep yet!

Wassilissa. What do you say! I am afraid of you. [*Laughs.*]

Luka. Go away, Wassili! Don't you see how she plays with you . . . pricks you on—can't you understand?

Pepel. Ah . . . so! [*To* WASSILISSA.] Don't give yourself any trouble. What you want will not be done.

Wassilissa. And what I do not want done, will not be done, Waska!

Pepel. [*Threatens her with his fist.*] We shall see. . . . [*Exit L. U. E.*]

Wassilissa. [*As she goes out R. U. E.*] I will prepare a glorious wedding for you.

Kostilioff. [*Advances on* LUKA.] So . . . What are you stirring up, old man?

Luka. Nothing, old man.

Kostilioff. Um! You are going to leave us, I hear!

Luka. It is time.

Kostilioff. Where to?

Luka. Wherever my nose points.

Kostilioff. You are going to become a vagabond again. You seem to be a rolling stone. . . .

Luka. Resting iron is rusting iron, says the proverb.

Kostilioff. That may be true of iron, but a man must remain in one place. . . . Men cannot be tumbling about like cockroaches in the kitchen . . . first here, then there. . . . A man must have a place which he can call home. . . . He must not be crawling aimlessly about the earth.

Luka. And if one—is at home everywhere?

Kostilioff. Then he is only—a tramp . . . a good-for-nothing fellow . . . a man must make himself useful . . . he must work. . . .

Luka. What's that you're saying?

Kostilioff. Yes, indeed! What else then? . . . You call yourself a wanderer, a pilgrim. . . . What is a pilgrim? A pilgrim is one who goes his own way—keeps to himself . . . has peculiarities, so to speak, is unlike other people . . . that's what we understand about a true pilgrim. . . . He ponders and unravels . . . and at last discovers something . . . perhaps the truth, who knows? . . . He holds his truth for himself, and remains silent. If he is a true pilgrim, he remains silent. . . . Or, he speaks so that no one understands him. . . . He has no wish to be gratified, doesn't turn people's heads, does not butt-in. How others live—gives him no concern. . . . He lives proudly and in rectitude . . . searches out the forest and the unfrequented places . . . where no one comes. He is in nobody's way, condemns nobody . . . but prays for all . . . for all the sinners of this world . . . for me, for you . . . for all! He flies from the vanity of this world—to prayer. So it is. [*Pause.*] And you . . . what sort of a pilgrim are you . . . you have not even a passport. . . . Every law-abiding citizen must have a passport . . . all orderly people have passports . . . yes. . . .

Luka. There are people and there are men. . . .

Kostilioff. Don't get funny! Don't give us any riddle . . . I am not your fool. . . . What do you mean by people—and men?

Luka. This is no riddle. I mean—there are stony fields which are not worth sowing . . . and there are fertile fields . . . whatever is sown thereon—yields a harvest . . . so it is. . . .

Kostilioff. And what does all this mean?

Luka. You, for example . . . If God himself said to you: "Michailo, be a man," it is certain that it would be useless. . . . As you are, so you will remain for all time. . . .

Kostilioff. Ah . . . and do you know that my wife's uncle is on the police force? And if I . . .

Wassilissa. [*Enters R.*] Michailo Ivanitsch, come drink your tea. . . .

Kostilioff. [*To* LUKA.] Hear me, you—keep out of this row—leave my house. . . .

Wassilissa. Yes, put on your knapsack, old man . . . your tongue is too long . . . who

knows . . . perhaps you may be an escaped convict.

Kostilioff. Be sure that you disappear today . . . or else . . . we shall see.

Luka. Or else you will call your uncle, eh? Call him . . . tell him, you can catch a convict here, uncle . . . then your uncle will receive a reward . . . three copecs. . . .

Bubnoff. [*Looking out from over the stove.*] What business are you haggling about . . . what is it . . . for three copecs?

Luka. We are trying to sell me.

Wassilissa. [*To her husband.*] Let's go.

Bubnoff. For three copecs. Take care old man . . . or they will sell you for one copec. . . .

Kostilioff. [*To* BUBNOFF.] What are you staring out of there for, like a hobgoblin out of a tunnel? [*Approaches R. with* WASSILISSA.]

Wassilissa. How many blackbirds there are in the world . . . how many knaves.

Luka. I wish you a good appetite.

Wassilissa. [*Turns to him.*] Take good care of yourself—you dirty toadstool. [*Exit with* KOSTILIOFF *R.*]

Luka. Tonight—I leave.

Bubnoff. You'll do right. It is always best to go before it is too late. . . .

Luka. Quite right.

Bubnoff. I speak from experience. I took my own departure once at the right moment, and saved myself a trip to Siberia.

Luka. What do you say?

Bubnoff. It is true. The case was thus: my wife had a love affair with my assistant . . . and a very good assistant he was, I must admit . . . he could make the most beautiful polar bear furs from dog skins . . . cat skins he dyed into Kangaroos . . . into musk rats . . . into anything you could wish . . . a very clever fellow. My wife was madly in love with him. They hung on each other so much that I feared every moment they would poison me or put me out of the world in some other way. I whipped my wife often, and my assistant whipped me . . . and I tell you he made a savage job of it, too. Once he pulled half my beard out and broke a rib for me. Naturally I was not particular when I struck back . . . gave my wife one over the skull with an iron yardstick . . . we were generally fighting like good fellows. Finally I saw there was no chance for me . . . they would surely fix it for me. Then I arranged a plan—to kill my wife . . . I had quite made up my mind. But in the nick of time—I came to my senses—and cleared out of the row. . . .

Luka. It was better so, let them be quiet there making polar bears out of dogs.

Bubnoff. Worse luck, the shop was in her name . . . only what I had on my back I kept . . . though, to speak honestly, I would have drunk the place up in no time . . . I am a glorious drunk you understand.

Luka. A glorious drunk.

Bubnoff. Oh, a glorious drunk. When things come my way I soak up everything in sight. And then I am lazy . . . nothing is more terrible than work.

[SAHTIN *and the* ACTOR *come in quarreling.*]

Sahtin. Nonsense! You will go nowhere. You're talking stupid stuff. Tell me, pilgrim . . . what spark have you been throwing into this burned stump?

Actor. You lie! Grandfather, tell him that he lies. I go. I have worked today. I have cleaned the pavement . . . and drunk no whiskey. What do you say now? There, see—two fifteeners, and I am sober.

Sahtin. It is all wrong! Give it to me, I'll spend it on drink . . . or lose it at cards.

Actor. Let it alone. It is for the journey.

Luka. [*To* SAHTIN.] Listen you—why do you try to upset his resolution?

Sahtin. "Tell me, you wizard, darting of the gods—what shall fate with my future do?"[1] Moneyless, brother, I have played everything away, broke. But the world is not lost, old man; there are still sharper knaves than I.

Luka. You are a lusty brother, Constantine . . . a loveable man. . . .

Bubnoff. You actor, come here.

[*The* ACTOR *goes to the stove and talks apart with* BUBNOFF.]

Sahtin. When I was still young, I was a jolly chicken. I look back on it with pleasure. . . . I had the soul of a man. . . . I danced splendidly, acted, was a famous bachelor . . . simply phenomenal!

Luka. How then have you gotten so far afield . . . hm?

Sahtin. You are curious, old man. You would know all . . . and what for?

Luka. I always like to know about . . . mankind's difficulties . . . and I do not understand you, Constantine. When I look at

[1] Citation from Pushkin.

you . . . such a loveable man . . . so sensible . . . then suddenly . . .

Sahtin. The prison, grandfather. Four years and seven months I have done, and coming out, a discharged convict, I found my course in life shut up. . . .

Luka. Oh, oh, oh! Why then were you imprisoned?

Sahtin. On account of a deceiver—whom I killed in a passion. . . . In prison, too, I learned my art of card playing. . . .

Luka. And why did you kill him? On account of a woman?

Sahtin. On account of my own sister. . . . Stop questioning . . . it annoys me. . . . It is . . . an old story . . . my sister is dead . . . nine years have gone by . . . she was a splendid creature . . . my sister. . . .

Luka. You take life easily. It falls more heavily on others. . . . Did you just now, for example, hear the locksmith crying out—oh, oh!

Sahtin. Kleshtsch?

Luka. The same. No work, he cried . . . absolutely none. . . .

Sahtin. You will get accustomed to that . . . Tell me, what shall I now begin to do?

Luka. [*Softly.*] Look, there he comes. . . .

[KLESHTSCH *enters slowly L. U. E. with sunken head.*]

Sahtin. Heh, there, widower! What are you hanging your head for? What are you brooding over?

Kleshtsch. My skull is splitting from it. What shall I do now? My tools are gone. The funeral has eaten everything up. . . .

Sahtin. I will give you a piece of advice. Do nothing at all. Burden the earth with your weight—simple enough.

Kleshtsch. You advise well. . . . I—still am ashamed before others.

Sahtin. Drop it . . . people are not ashamed to let you live worse than a dog. Just imagine if you would not work, and I would not work . . . and still hundreds and thousands of others would not work . . . and finally everybody—understand?—everybody quit work and nobody did anything at all—what, do you think, would happen then?

Kleshtsch. Everybody would starve. . . .

Luka. [*To* SAHTIN.] There is such a sect. "Jumpers," they call themselves. . . . They talk exactly like you. . . .

Sahtin. I know them. . . . They are not at all such fools, pilgrim.

[*From* KOSTILIOFF'S *room R. U. E. screaming.*]

Natasha. [*Within.*] What are you doing—stop . . . what have I done?

Luka. [*Disquieted.*] Who is screaming there. Was it not Natasha? Ah, you. . . .

[*From* KOSTILIOFF'S *room is heard a loud alarm, and then from the kitchen the sound of crashing dishes.*]

Kostilioff. [*Within, screaming.*] A—ah—you cat—you . . . heathen.

Wassilissa. [*Within.*] Wait . . . I'll give her . . . so . . . so . . . and so. . . .

Natasha. [*Within.*] Help! They are killing me!

Sahtin. [*Runs up steps R. U. E. shouting.*] Heh, there! What are you howling about?

Luka. [*Walks about uneasily.*] Waska . . . he must be called. . . . Wassili. . . . Oh, God! . . . Children, my dears.

Actor. [*Hurries out, L. U. E.*] I'll bring him . . . right away. . . .

Bubnoff. They're treating the poor girl badly these days.

Sahtin. Come, pilgrim. . . . We will be witnesses. . . .

Luka. [*Exit after* SAHTIN *R.*] Why witnesses? Too often, already, have I been a witness. If Waska would only come . . . Oh! this is terrible! terrible!

Natasha. [*Within.*] Sister . . . dear sister . . . wah . . . wa . . . a. . . .

Bubnoff. Now they have stopped her mouth. . . . I'll see myself.

[*The noise in* KOSTILIOFF'S *room is weaker, and nothing comes from the kitchen.*]

Kostilioff. [*Within.*] Halt!

[*A door is slammed within, and the whole noise is cut off as if by a hatchet. On the stage, silence. . . . It is twilight.*]

Kleshtsch. [*Sits on bench U. taking no part, and rubbing his hands together. Then he begins to mumble to himself, at first indistinctly. Then louder.*] How then? . . . a man must live. [*Louder.*] At least a shelter . . . but no, not that . . . not even a corner where I can lie down. . . . Nothing but the bare man . . . helpless and deserted.

[*Exit bent over, L. U. E. slowly. For a few moments, ominous silence. Then somewhere within, on the R. a terrible noise, a chaos of tones, louder and*

louder and nearer and nearer. Then a single voice is heard.]

Wassilissa. [*Within.*] I am her sister. Let me go. . . .

Kostilioff. [*Within.*] What right have you to interfere?

Wassilissa. [*Within.*] You convict!

Sahtin. [*Within.*] Bring Waska . . . be quick . . . Zoba, strike.

[*A policeman's whistle is heard.*]

Tartar. [*Jumps down the steps, R. U. E., his right hand bound up.*] What sort of laws are these . . . to murder in broad daylight?

[KRIVOI ZOBA *hurries in L. U. E., followed by* KOSTILIOFF.]

Krivoi Zoba. Now, he got it from me.

Medviedeff. How did you come to strike him?

Tartar. And you—do you not know what your duty is?

Medviedeff. [*Running after* KRIVOI ZOBA.] Stop! Give me my whistle back. [*Exit L. U. E.*]

Kostilioff. [*Enters R. U. E.*] Abram! Catch him . . . hold him tight. He has killed me. . . .

[*Down the steps R. U. E. come* KVASCHNYA *and* NASTIAH. *They help* NATASHA, *who is badly beaten up.* SAHTIN *runs up the stairs, bumping into* WASSILISSA, *who is throwing her arms about and trying to strike her sister.* ALYOSCHKA *is jumping around like one possessed. He whistles in* WASSILISSA'S *ear and howls. A couple of ragged fellows and some men and women appear L. U. E.*]

Sahtin. [*To* WASSILISSA.] Enough, you damned owl!

Wassilissa. Away, convict. If it costs me my life, I will tear her to pieces.

Kvaschnya. [*Leads* NATASHA *aside.*] Stop, Karpovna . . . for shame! How can you be so inhuman?

Medviedeff. [*Re-enters L. U. E., takes* SAHTIN *by the collar.*] Aha! Now I have you!

Sahtin. Krivoi Zoba. Strike . . . Waska, Waska.

[*All storm the entrance, L. U. E.* NATASHA *is taken to the bed,* L. PEPEL *enters L. U. E, pushing them away.*]

Pepel. Where is Natasha, you?

Kostilioff. [*Crouches on the steps R. U. E.*] Abram! Catch Waska . . . brother, help catch Waska . . . the thief . . . the robber. . . .

Pepel. There, you old goat.

[*Strikes* KOSTILIOFF *brutally. He falls so that his body lies on the landing, his legs hidden up the stairs.* PEPEL *hurries to* NATASHA.]

Wassilissa. Fix Waska . . . friends . . . do up the thief!

Medviedeff. [*To* SAHTIN.] You shouldn't have interfered . . . this is a family affair here. They are all related to each other . . . and who are you?

Pepel. [*To* NATASHA.] What did she hit you with? Did she stab you? . . .

Kvaschnya. Look what a beast. They have scalded her legs with hot water.

Nastiah. They turned the samovar over.

Tartar. It might have been an accident . . . if you are not sure you should not accuse. . . .

Natasha. [*Half unconscious.*] Wassili . . . take me away . . . hide me. . . .

Wassilissa. Look, my friends . . . come here. He is dead . . . they have killed him.

[*All gather at the landing.* BUBNOFF *separates himself from the others and crosses to* PEPEL.]

Bubnoff. [*Softly.*] Waska! The old man . . . is done for.

Pepel. [*Looks at* BUBNOFF *as though he did not understand.*] Get a cab . . . she must be taken to the hospital. . . . I'll settle the bill.

Bubnoff. Listen to what I'm saying. Somebody has finished the old man. . . .

[*The noise on the stage subsides like a fire into which water has been poured. Half aloud separate sentences are uttered.*]

Is it really true?

We have it there!

Terrible!

We had better get out, brother!

The devil!

We need clear heads now!

Get out before the police come!

[*The group becomes smaller.* BUBNOFF *and the* TARTAR *disappear.* NASTIAH *and* KVASCHNYA *stoop to* KOSTILIOFF'S *body.*]

Wassilissa. [*Rises and cries in a triumphant tone.*] They have killed him . . . my husband! And who did it? He, there! Waska killed him. I saw it, my friends. I saw it! Now, Waska! Police! Police!

Pepel. [*Leaves* NATASHA.] Let me alone . . . get out of the way. [*Stares at the body. To* WASSILISSA.] Now? Now you are glad? [*Kicks the body.*] Scotched at last . . . the old hound. Now you have your desire. . . . Shall I treat you in the same way . . . and twist your necks? [*Falls on her, but is quietly caught by* SAHTIN *and* KRIVOI ZOBA. WASSILISSA *hides L. U. E.*]

Sahtin. Come to your senses.

Krivoi Zoba. P-r-r-r! Where would you spring?

Wassilissa. [*Appearing again.*] Nyah, Waska, friend of my heart! Nobody escapes his fate . . . the police! Abram . . . whistle!

Medviedeff. They have stolen my whistle, the fiends. . . .

Alyoschka. Here it is. [*He whistles,* MEDVIEDEFF *chases him.*]

Sahtin. [*Leads* PEPEL *back to* NATASHA.] Don't worry Waska. Killed in a row . . . a trifle! Only a short sentence for that. . . .

Wassilissa. Hold him tight. Waska murdered him. . . . I saw it!

Sahtin. I handed him a couple myself. . . . How much does an old man need? Call me as a witness, Waska. . . .

Pepel. I . . . do I need to justify myself? . . . But Wassilissa. . . . I'll pull her into it! She wanted it done. . . . She incited me to kill her husband . . . yes, she was the instigator. . . .

Natasha. [*Suddenly springing up.*] Ah. . . . [*In a loud voice.*] Now it is clear. . . . That's how it stands. Wassili! Listen, good people: it was all arranged. He and my sister, they plotted it out, they laid their plans! I see, Wassili! Before . . . you spoke with me . . . that was part of it! Good people, she is his mistress . . . you know it . . . everybody knows it. . . . They understand each other. She, she instigated the murder . . . her husband was in the way . . . for that reason . . . she beat me so. . . .

Pepel. Natalija! What are you saying? . . . What are you saying?

Sahtin. Foolish chatter.

Wassilissa. She lies! All of it is lies. . . . I know nothing. . . . Waska killed him . . . he alone!

Natasha. They have plotted it out. . . . They shall be convicted . . . both of them.

Sahtin. Here is a game for you. . . . Now Wassili, hold fast or they will drown you.

Krivoi Zoba. I can't understand . . . ah . . . far away from here.

Pepel. Natalija. . . . Speak . . . are you in earnest? Can you believe that I . . . with her. . . .

Sahtin. For God's sake, Natasha, be sensible.

Wassilissa. [*On the landing.*] They killed my husband . . . you high born . . . Waska Pepel, the thief, killed him, Mr. Commissioner . . . I saw it . . . everybody saw it.

Natasha. [*Waltzing about half senseless.*] Good people . . . my sister and Waska . . . they killed him. Mr. Policeman . . . listen to me . . . these two, my sister put him up to it . . . her lover . . . she instigated him . . . there he is, the accursed—the two did it. Arrest them . . . take them to court . . . and take me, too . . . to prison with me! For the sake of God . . . to prison. . . .

ACT FOUR

The same setting except that PEPEL'S *room is not to be seen, the partitions having been removed. The anvil, too, where* KLESHTSCH *sat, is gone. In the corner which was occupied by* PEPEL'S *chamber is a bunk on which the* TARTAR *lies, restlessly rolling about and groaning with pain.* KLESHTSCH *sits at the table repairing an accordion and now and then trying the chords. At the other end of the table sit* SAHTIN, *the* BARON, *and* NASTIAH. *Before them a bottle of spirits, three bottles of beer and a great hunk of black bread. On the stove the* ACTOR, *shifting about and coughing. It is night. The stage is lit by a lamp which is in the middle of the table. Outside the wind howls.*

Kleshtsch. Yes. . . . In the midst of the row he disappeared.

Baron. He took flight before the police, as a fog before the sun.

Sahtin. So all sinners fly before the face of the just.

Nastiah. He was a splendid old man . . . and you are not men . . . you are rust. . . .

Baron. [*Drinks.*] To your health, lady!

Sahtin. An interesting patriarch . . . truly! Our Nastiah fell in love with him.

Nastiah. True. . . . I fell in love with him. He had an eye for everything . . . he understood everything. . . .

Sahtin. [*Laughs.*] For some people he was a Godsend . . . like mush for the toothless.

Baron. [*Laughs.*] Or a poultice for an abscess.

Kleshtsch. He had a sympathetic heart . . . you here . . . have no sympathy.

Sahtin. What good would it do you for me to show you pity?

Kleshtsch. You need not sympathize . . . but at least . . . do not injure me. . . .

Tartar. [*Gets up on his bench and moves his injured hand back and forth, as if it were a baby.*] The old man was good. . . . He had respect for the law in his heart . . . and whoever in his heart keeps the law . . . that man is good. He who does not—is lost. . . .

Baron. What law do you mean, prince?

Tartar. As you will . . . the law . . . the law to you . . . you understand me.

Baron. Go on.

Tartar. Encroach upon no man . . . there you have the law. . . .

Sahtin. With us in Russia it is called, "Code for Criminal Punishment and Correction."

Baron. With another "Code for Penalties Imposed by Justices of the Peace."

Tartar. With us it is called the Koran. . . . Your Koran is your law . . . our Koran we must carry in our hearts.

Kleshtsch. [*Tries the accordion.*] Don't be forever hissing, you beast. What the prince says is right. . . . We must live according to the law . . . according to the gospels. . . .

Sahtin. Live so.

Baron. Try it.

Tartar. Mohammed gave us the Koran . . . there you have your law, he said. Do, as is written therein. Then a time shall come when the Koran will not suffice . . . a new time with new laws . . . for every epoch has its own laws. . . .

Sahtin. Yes, of course, our epoch gives us "Criminal Code." A durable law, not so easily worn off.

Nastiah. [*Knocks on the table with her knuckles.*] Now I would like to know . . . exactly why I live . . . here with you? I shall go . . . anywhere . . . to the end of the earth.

Baron. Without shoes, lady?

Nastiah. Quite naked, as far as I care! I shall crawl on all fours if you please.

Baron. That would be picturesque . . . on all fours. . . .

Nastiah. I would do it . . . willingly . . . if I only need not have to look at your snout again . . . ah, how disgusting everything has become to me . . . my whole life . . . everybody.

Sahtin. When you go, take the actor along with you. . . . He'll soon be going anyhow . . . he has learned that exactly half a mile from the end of the earth there is a hospital for orgisms. . . .

Actor. [*Sticks his head out over the edge of the stove.*] For organisms, blockhead.

Sahtin. For organs which are poisoned with alcohol.

Actor. Yes, he will soon be going, very soon! You will see!

Baron. Who is this "he," sire?

Actor. It is I.

Baron. Merci, servant of the goddess, who . . . ah, what is she called? The goddess of the drama, of tragedy . . . what is her name?

Actor. The muse, blockhead, no goddess, but muse!

Sahtin. Lachesis . . . Hera . . . Aphrodite . . . Atropos . . . the devil knows the difference between them . . . and our young adorer of the muse shall leave us . . . the old man has wound him up. . . .

Baron. The old man was a fool. . . .

Actor. And you are ignorant savages. You don't even know who Melpomene is. Heartless . . . you will see—he will leave you! "Interrupt not your orgy, black souls," as Beranger says. . . . He will soon find the place where there is nothing more . . . absolutely.

Baron. Where there is nothing more, sire?

Actor. Yes! Nothing more, "this hole here . . . it shall be my grave. . . . I die, faded and powerless." And you, why do you live? Why?

Baron. Just listen, you—Kean, or Genius and Passion. Don't bellow so.

Actor. Hold your snout. . . . So I will, I'll roar!

Nastiah. [*Raises her head from the table, and waves her arms about.*] Roar forever! They may hear it.

Baron. What is the meaning of that, lady?

Sahtin. Let her chatter, Baron . . . the devil take them both . . . may they scream . . . may they run their heads together . . . go on . . . it has a meaning. . . . Don't injure others, as the old man said . . . the pilgrim has made us all rebellious.

Kleshtsch. He enticed us to start out . . . and knew not himself the way.

Baron. The old man was a charlatan.

Nastiah. It is not true! You are yourself a charlatan.

Baron. Don't chatter, lady.

Kleshtsch. He was no friend of truth, the old man. . . . He stood with all his might over against the truth . . . and after all, he is right . . . of what use to me is all truth, when I haven't a mouthful? There, look at the prince. [*Looks towards the* TARTAR.] . . . He has crushed his hand at work . . . now they say, it must come off . . . there you have the truth.

Sahtin. [*Strikes the table with his fist.*] Be still! Asses! Say nothing ill of the old man. [*More quietly.*] You, Baron, are the biggest fool of all . . . you have no glimmering of sense—and you keep on chattering. The old man a charlatan? What is truth? Mankind is the truth! He had seized that . . . but you have not! You are as stupid as a brick in the pavement. I understood him very well, the old man. . . . He did tell them lies, but he lied out of sympathy, as the devil knows. There are many such people who lie for brotherly sympathy's sake. . . . I know I have read about it. They lie so beautifully, with such spirit, so wonderfully. We have such soothing, such conciliating lies. . . . And there are lies which justify taking the anvil away, and the mashed hand of the toiler . . . which bring charges against the starving. . . . I . . . know these lies. . . . He who has a timid heart . . . or lives at another's table, should be lied to . . . it gives him courage . . . puts a mantle on his shoulders . . . but he who is his own master, who is independent, and lives not from the sweat of another's brow . . . what are lies to him? The lie is the religion of servant and master . . . the truth is the inheritance of free men!

Baron. Bravo! Gloriously said! Exactly my idea! You speak . . . like a man of respectability!

Sahtin. Why shouldn't a scoundrel speak like a respectable man, when the respectable people talk so much like scoundrels? . . . I have forgotten much, but one thing I still keep. The old man? He had a shrewd head on his shoulders. . . . He worked on me like acid on an old, dirty coin. To his health, let him live! Pour one. . . . [NASTIAH *pours a glass of beer and hands it to* SAHTIN. *He laughs.*] The old man—he lived from within. . . . He saw everything with his own eyes. . . . I asked him once: "Grandfather, why do men really live?" . . . [*He tries in voice and manner to imitate* LUKA.] Man lives ever to give birth to strength. There live, for example, the carpenters, noisy, miserable people . . . and suddenly in their midst is a carpenter born . . . such a carpenter as the world has never seen; he is above all, no other carpenter can be compared to him. He gives a new face to the whole trade . . . his own face, so to speak . . . and with that simple impulse it has advanced twenty years . . . and so the others live . . . the locksmiths and the shoemakers, and all the rest of the working people . . . and the contractors . . . and the same is true of other classes—all to give birth to strength. Every one thinks that he for himself takes up room in the world, but it turns out that he is here for another's benefit—for some one better . . . a hundred years . . . or perhaps longer . . . if we live so long . . . for the sake of genius. [NASTIAH *stares into* SAHTIN'S *face.* KLESHTSCH *stops working on the accordion and does nothing. The* BARON *lets his head sink and drums with his fingers on the table. The* ACTOR *sticks his head over the edge of the stove, and carefully crawls down.* SAHTIN *goes on.*] All, my children, all, live only to give birth to strength. For that reason we must respect everybody. We cannot know who he is, for what purpose born, or what he may yet fulfil . . . perhaps he has been born for our good fortune . . . or great benefit . . . and especially must we respect the children . . . the little children . . . they must not suffer restraint . . . let them live their lives . . . let them be respected. [*Laughs quietly to himself. Pause.*]

Baron. [*Thoughtfully.*] For the genius. . . . Hm, yes . . . that brings to mind my own family . . . an old family . . . back to Catherine's time . . . of the nobility . . . knights . . . we came from France . . . and entered the Russian service . . . dignities accumulated on us. . . . Under Nicholas I., my grandfather, Gustav Deville . . . held a high post . . . he was rich. . . . Had hundreds of serfs . . . horses . . . a cook. . . .

Nastiah. Don't be lying . . . it's all a fake. . . .

Baron. [*Springing up.*] Wh-at? Nyah . . . say more!

Nastiah. It's all a fabrication.

Baron. [*Cries.*] A house in Moscow, a house in Petersburg! Coaches . . . escutcheons on the coach door.

[KLESHTSCH *takes the accordion and goes*

to the side R., where he observes the scene.]

Nastiah. Never was such a thing.

Baron. Stop chattering! Dozens of footmen . . . I tell you!

Nastiah. [*Tantalizing.*] None.

Baron. I'll kill you.

Nastiah. There were no coaches.

Sahtin. Let up, Nastenka. Don't make him so furious.

Baron. Wait . . . you wench . . . my grandfather—

Nastiah. You had no grandfather . . . none. [SAHTIN *laughs.*]

Baron. [*Sinks back on the seat quite out of breath with anger.*] Sahtin, I tell you . . . the harlot . . . what—you laugh, too? And you. . . . Won't believe me? [*Cries out desperately, striking the table with his fists.*] Go to the devil . . . all was as I say.

Nastiah. [*In a triumphant tone.*] Ah, ha! See how you bellow out! Now you know how a person feels when nobody believes him.

Kleshtsch. [*Returns to table.*] I thought we should have a fight.

Tartar. Stupid people . . . childish.

Baron. I . . . I'll not be made a fool of. . . . I have proof. . . . I have documents to satisfy. . . .

Sahtin. Throw them in the stove. And forget your grandfather's coach. In the coach of the past nobody gets anywhere.

Baron. How can she dare . . .

Nastiah. Hear the noise he is making . . . oh, Lord, how dare I?

Sahtin. But you see, she dares it. Is she still worse than you? For she has certainly had in her past no coach and no grandfather . . . perhaps not even a father and mother. . . .

Baron. [*Quieting himself.*] Go to the devil. . . . You reason everything out so coldbloodedly, while I . . . I believe I have no temper. . . .

Sahtin. Make yourself one. It is a useful thing. . . . [*Pause.*] Tell me, Nastiah, do you not go often to the hospital?

Nastiah. What for?

Sahtin. To Natasha?

Nastiah. Why, have you dropped from Heaven? She has long been out . . . out and gone. . . . Nowhere is she to be found. . . .

Sahtin. Gone? Disappeared?

Kleshtsch. I would like to know whether Waska got Wassilissa into trouble or Wassilissa, Waska.

Nastiah. Wassilissa? She will lie herself out. She is crafty. She will send Waska to the mines. . . .

Sahtin. For manslaughter in a row, only imprisonment. . . .

Nastiah. Shame. Hard labor would be better. You ought to be sentenced to hard labor too. You ought to be swept away like a pile of trash . . . into a ditch.

Sahtin. [*Taken aback.*] What are you talking about. You are certainly mad.

Baron. I'll box your ears . . . impertinent hussy.

Nastiah. Try it once, just touch me!

Baron. Certainly I'll try it!

Sahtin. Let her be. Don't touch her. Don't insult any one. I always remember the old man. [*Laughs aloud.*] Don't insult mankind, not in her. . . . And if I should be insulted so that my reputation was forever gone. . . . What should I then do. . . . Forgive. No and never!

Baron. [*To* NASTIAH.] Mark you! you: I am not one of your kind . . . you . . . wench.

Nastiah. Ah, you wretch! You . . . you live with me like a maggot in an apple.

[*The men laugh understandingly.*]

Kleshtsch. Silly goose! A fine apple you are. . . .

Baron. Shall a man get mad . . . over such . . . an idiot?

Nastiah. You laugh? Don't sham! You don't feel like laughing. . . .

Actor. [*Darkly.*] Give him what is his.

Nastiah. If I only . . . could: I would take you all and . . . [*Takes a cup from the table and smashes it on the floor.*] like that!

Tartar. What are you breaking the dishes for . . . dunce?

Baron. [*Rising.*] No, I must teach her manners.

Nastiah. [*Going out.*] Go to the devil.

Sahtin. [*Calls after her.*] Let up, will you? Why do you treat her so? Will you frighten her?

Nastiah. You wolves! It is time you were dead. [*Exit L. U. E.*]

Actor. [*Darkly.*] Amen!

Tartar. Ugh, mad folks these Russian women! Hussies, unmanageable. The Tartar women are not so, they know the law.

Kleshtsch. She must be given something that she will remember.

Baron. A low-born creature.

Kleshtsch. [*Tries the accordion.*] Ready,

and your owner is not to be seen . . . The boy is a lively one.

Sahtin. Now have a drink!

Kleshtsch. [*Drinks.*] Thanks! It is time to be turning in. . . .

Sahtin. You'll fall in with our habits after awhile, eh?

Kleshtsch. [*Drinks and goes to the bunk in the corner.*] If I do. . . . Everywhere, in the long run, people are to be found. . . . You do not see them at first . . . but later, when you see truer, people are to be found everywhere . . . and they are not so bad after all. . . .

[*The* TARTAR *spreads a cloth out over the bunk, sits down and prays.*]

Baron. [*To* SAHTIN, *pointing to the* TARTAR.] Just look.

Sahtin. Let him alone. . . . He is a good fellow. . . . Don't disturb him! [*Laughs aloud.*] I am so chicken hearted today. . . . The devil may know what's coming.

Baron. You are always a little chicken hearted when you have some spirits in you . . . and rational then.

Sahtin. When I am drunk everything pleases me. Hm—yes. . . . He prays? Very beautiful of him. A man can believe or not believe . . . that rests with him. Man is free . . . he is responsible to himself for everything: for his belief, his unbelief, his love, his wisdom. Man himself bears the cost of all, is therefore —free. . . . Man—that is the truth! But what's man? Not you, nor I, not they—no, but you, I, old Luka, Napoleon, Mohammed . . . all in one . . . is man. [*Draws in the air the outline of a man's form.*] Comprehend! It is—something huge, including all beginnings and all endings . . . all is in man, all is for man. Only man alone exists—the rest is the work of his hand and his brow. M-an! phenomenal. How loftily it sounds, M-a-n! We must respect man . . . not compassion . . . degrade him not with pity . . . but respect. Drink we, to the health of man, baron. How splendid it is to feel yourself a man. I . . . I, a former convict, a murderer, a cheat . . . yes, when I pass along the street, the people stare at me, as though I were the most desperate of thieves . . . they get out of my way, they look after me . . . and often say to me, thief, why don't you work? . . . Work? What for? To become satiated. [*Laughs aloud.*] I have always hated those who eat themselves to death. It comes to nothing, baron, to nothing. The man is the principal thing, man stands higher than a full stomach. [*Rises from his place.*]

Baron. [*Shakes his head.*] You are a contemplator . . . that is wise . . . that warms my heart. . . . I can't do it. [*Looks around carefully and continues in a lower tone.*] I am sometimes afraid, brother . . . do you understand? I fear what may come next.

Sahtin. [*Goes up and down.*] Nonsense, what shall man fear?

Baron. As far back as I can remember, it always seemed to me as though a fog lay on my brow. I never knew very well just what was the matter, was never at ease. . . . I felt as if my whole life long I had only put on my clothes and taken them off again . . . why? No idea! I studied. . . . I wore the uniform of an institute for the nobility . . . but what I have learned, I don't know. . . . I married . . . put on a frock coat, then a night gown . . . selected a detestable wife—why? I don't understand. . . . I went through everything—and wore a shabby gray jacket and red-fuzzy trousers . . . but I finally went to the dogs. Hardly took any notice of it. I was employed at the Kameral Court . . . had a uniform, a cap with cockade. . . . I embezzled government money . . . pulled on the convict's jacket . . . then—what I have on now . . . and all . . . as if in a dream . . . funny, eh?

Sahtin. Not very. . . . I find it rather foolish.

Baron. Yes. . . . I think it was foolish. . . . But I must have been born for something . . . eh?

Sahtin. [*Laughs.*] It is possible. . . . Man is born to give birth again to strength. [*Nods his head.*] Yes . . . fine idea.

Baron. This . . . Natasjka. . . . Simply ran out. . . . I will see where she has hidden. . . . Still, she. . . . [*Exit L. U. E. Pause.*]

Actor. You Tartar! [*Pause.*] Prince! [*The* TARTAR *turns his head.*] Pray for me.

Tartar. What do you want?

Actor. [*Softly.*] You must pray . . . for me. . . .

Tartar. [*After a short silence.*] Pray for yourself.

Actor. [*Climbs quickly down from the stove, mounts the table, pours a glass of whiskey with trembling hand, drinks and goes out hastily, almost running, L. U. E.*] Now, I go!

Sahtin. Heh, you Sigambrer! Where to? [*He whistles.*]

[MEDVIEDEFF *in a woman's wadded jacket, and* BUBNOFF, *enter R. U. E.* BUBNOFF *carries in one hand a bundle of pretzels, in the other a couple of smoked fish, under his arm a bottle of whiskey, and in his coat pocket a second.*]

Medviedeff. The camel is . . . a sort of ass, so to speak. Only it has no ears.

Bubnoff. Let up! You yourself . . . are a sort of jackass.

Medviedeff. The camel has no ears at all. It hears with the nostrils.

Bubnoff. [*To* SAHTIN.] Friend of my heart, I have searched for you in every barroom and dive. Take the bottle out, my hands are full.

Sahtin. Put the pretzels on the table and then you will have a free hand.

Bubnoff. That's right . . . you know the law . . . you have a sly head. . . .

Medviedeff. All scoundrels have sly heads. . . . I know that . . . long. How could they catch anything without slyness? A law-abiding citizen can be stupid, but a thief must have brains in his head. But about this camel, brother, you are wrong there . . . a camel is a sort of riding deer, I say . . . it has no horns . . . and no teeth, either. . . .

Bubnoff. Where's the whole crowd hiding? Nobody here. Say, you, come out. . . . I treat today . . . who sits there in the corner?

Sahtin. You have already spent almost everything, scarecrow.

Bubnoff. Of course, this time my capital was small . . . which I had scraped together. . . . Krivoi Zoba! Where is Krivoi Zoba?

Kleshtsch. [*Steps to the table.*] He is not there.

Bubnoff. U-u-rrr! Bull dog. Brrju, Brlyu, Brlyu, turkey cock! Don't be barking and snarling! Drink, fast, don't let your head hang. . . . I invite all, freely. I love to do that, brother! If I was a rich man, I would have a barroom in which everything would be free, by God, with music and a choir of singers. Come, drink, eat, do you hear, quicken your souls. Come to me, poor men, to my free barroom, Sahtin! Brother! I would you . . . there, take half my entire capital; there, take it.

Sahtin. Oh, give it all to me. . . .

Bubnoff. All? My whole capital? Do you want it? . . . There! A ruble . . . another . . . twenty . . . a couple of fivers . . . a pair of two copec pieces . . . that is all!

Sahtin. Lovely . . . I'll keep it safely. . . . I'll win my money back with it.

Medviedeff. I am a witness . . . you have given him the money in trust . . . how much was it, though?

Bubnoff. You? You are—a camel. . . . We need no witnesses.

Alyoschka. [*Enters L. U. E. with bare feet.*] Children! I have gotten my feet wet!

Bubnoff. Come—get your gullet wet . . . to balance matters. You're a lovely boy, you sing and make music . . . very clever of you! But—drink . . . not too much! Guzzling is very injurious, brother . . . very injurious. . . .

Alyoschka. I see that in you . . . you only look like a man after you have gotten drunk. Kleshtsch! Is my accordion mended? [*Sings and dances with it.*]

If I were not such a tasty boy,
So lively, fresh and neat,
Then Madam Godfather would
Never again call me sweet.

Frozen stiff, children. It is cold.

Medviedeff. Hm—and if I may be bold enough to ask: Who is Madam Godfather?

Bubnoff. You . . . are not interested in that! You have nothing to ask here now. You are no policeman any more . . . that's a fact. Neither police nor uncle. . . .

Alyoschka. But simply, auntie's husband!

Bubnoff. Of your nieces, one sits in prison, the other is dying. . . .

Medviedeff. [*Expands his chest.*] That is not true: She is not dying. She has simply gone away! [SAHTIN *laughs aloud.*]

Bubnoff. Quite true, brother! A man without nieces—is no uncle!

Alyoschka. Your excellency, the pensioned drum-major of the belly brigade.

Nary a single cent have I,
While Madam Godfather has money,
But still I'm nice, I'm very, very nice,
I'm as nice and as sweet as honey.

Brr, it is cold.

[KRIVOI ZOBA *enters, then, until the end of the act, couples, men and women, enter, undress themselves, stretch out on the bunks and grumble to themselves.*]

Krivoi Zoba. Why did you run away, Bubnoff?

Bubnoff. Come here and sit down. Let's

sing something, brother! My favorite hymn, eh?

Tartar. It is night now, time for sleeping. Sing during the day.

Sahtin. Let them sing, prince, come over here.

Tartar. Let them sing—and then a row. . . . You sing and they fight.

Bubnoff. [*Going to him.*] What's the matter with your hand, prince? Has somebody cut it off?

Tartar. Why cut it off? Let us wait. . . . Perhaps it will not be necessary to cut it off . . . a hand is not made of iron . . . cutting off is an easy thing to do. . . .

Krivoi Zoba. It is a bad job, Hassanka! What, are you without a hand? In our business they only look at the hands and the back. . . . A man without a hand is no man at all! Might as well be dead. Come, drink a glass with us.

Kvaschnya. [*Enters L. U. E.*] Ah, my dear tenants. Biting cold outside, slush . . . and raw. . . . Is my policeman there? Heh, there, Commissioner!

Medviedeff. Here I am.

Kvaschnya. You have my jacket on again? What is the matter with you? You have been having a bit, eh? That don't go.

Medviedeff. Bubnoff . . . has a birthday . . . and it is so cold, such slush. . . .

Kvaschnya. I'll teach you . . . such slush. . . . But don't forget the rules of this household . . . go to bed. . . .

Medviedeff. [*Exit R. to kitchen.*] To bed! I can. . . . I will . . . it is time. [*Exit.*]

Sahtin. Why are you . . . so strict with him?

Kvaschnya. There is nothing else to do, dear friend. A man like that must be closely reined. I did not marry him for fun. He is military, I thought . . . and you are a dangerous lot. . . . I, a woman, would be no match for you . . . now he's beginning to souse—no, my boy, that don't go.

Sahtin. You made a bad selection in your assistant. . . .

Kvaschnya. No, wait—he is all right . . . you will not get me . . . and if you did, the honeymoon would not last over a week . . . you'd gamble the clothes off my back.

Sahtin. [*Laughs.*] That's no lie, I would lose you. . . .

Kvaschnya. So, then. Alyoschka.

Alyoschka. Here he is. . . .

Kvaschnya. Tell me, what gossip have you been spreading about me?

Alyoschka. I? Everything! I tell everything that can honestly be told. What a woman! say I. Simply an astonishing woman. Flesh, fat, bones, over three hundred weight, and brains, not half a grain.

Kvaschnya. Nyah, you lie, my young man, I have quantities of brain. . . . No—why do you tell folks that I beat my policeman?

Alyoschka. I thought, because you tore his hair out . . . that is as good as a beating.

Kvaschnya. [*Laughs.*] You are a fool! Why carry such dirt out of the house? . . . that has grieved him sorely . . . he has taken to drink from worry over your gossip. . . .

Alyoschka. Listen: It is therefore true, what the proverb says: that the hen has a throat for liquor.

[SAHTIN *and* KLESHTSCH *laugh.*]

Kvaschnya. But you are witty: and tell me, what sort of animal you are, Alyoschka?

Alyoschka. I am a fellow who fits snugly into the world. The finest of the finest sort! A regular jack of all trades. Where my eye turns, there my heart follows.

Bubnoff. [*On the* TARTAR'S *bunk.*] Come, we will not let you sleep. Today we'll sing . . . the whole night, eh, Krivoi Zoba?

Krivoi Zoba. May we?

Alyoschka. I'll play for you. . . .

Sahtin. And we will hear it.

Tartar. [*Grunting.*] Nyah, old satan, Bubna . . . pour me a glass: "We'll revel, we'll drink until death gives the wink."

Bubnoff. Pour him one, Sahtin! Krivoi Zoba, sit down! Ah, brothers! How little a man needs! I, for example, I've only had a couple of swallows . . . and walk tangled footed. Krivoi Zoba, strike up . . . my favorite song. I will sing and weep.

Krivoi Zoba. [*Sings.*] "Though still the sun goes up and down. . . ."

Bubnoff. [*Falls in.*] "No gleam can pierce to me in here." [*The door is jerked open.*]

Baron. [*On the platform, crying.*] Heh, there . . . you! Come quick . . . come out! In the yard . . . there . . . the actor . . . has hanged himself!

[*Silence, all stare at the* BARON. *Behind him appears* NASTIAH, *who with staring eyes goes to the table.*]

Sahtin. [*Softly.*] He must spoil our song . . . the fool.

THE END

THE RATS

(DIE RATTEN)

By GERHART HAUPTMANN

Translated from the German by LUDWIG LEWISOHN

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GERHART HAUPTMANN AND HIS PLAYS

Gerhart Hauptmann, the greatest dramatist of modern Germany, and the author of *The Rats,* was born in the province of Obersalzbrunn, in Silesia (then a portion of Germany) in 1862. His first wish was to be a sculptor, and he studied art in the German cities of Breslau and Jena and also in Italy. After he settled in Berlin, he became associated with that remarkable experimental theatre known as "The Free Stage," a counterpart of Antoine's Théâtre Libre in Paris. In 1889 the Free Stage produced his play *Before Dawn,* which created a sensation; and, in 1892, his naturalistic tragedy *The Weavers,* which established his reputation. Since that time Hauptmann has dominated the German stage, and has become one of the pervading influences in modern drama.

Although Hauptmann is usually labelled a "naturalist," his thirty plays include a variety of forms; not only naturalistic tragedies, such as *The Rats* and *The Weavers,* and naturalistic comedies such as *The Beaver Coat,* but also historical plays, in which, like Strindberg and Shaw, he applies the principles of modern psychology to old material, such as *Charlemagne's Hostage;* fantasies, such as *And Pippa Dances;* dream plays, such as *Hannele;* and fairy plays, such as the allegorical dramatic poem *The Sunken Bell.* But whatever his method, it is always dictated by the inner necessities of his subject-matter. In this light, it is unjust to accuse Hauptmann of never having found himself—of having tried many methods without pursuing any one of them to its consummation.

Despite his fine achievements in various forms, Hauptmann is most widely known as a naturalist, and for good reason. It is true that he was not the very first to use the naturalistic method in the drama. Henri Becque in France had begun the movement; Tolstoi in Russia had written naturalistic plays, for naturalism was indigenous to Russia. But Hauptmann consciously carried the movement further, and achieved in it larger results. It was the object of naturalism to bring the drama back to reality and truth; and to evolve a technique that should be consonant with the subject-matter.

In carrying out these principles Hauptmann created a method that discards traditional artifices and subordinates plot invention to the portrayal of character. In his capacity simply as a naturalist, he selects his material with care and remoulds it into a shape that represents human beings in the guise of a product of the two great forces, heredity and environment. He often chooses untutored persons as his subjects, partly, perhaps, because such persons more clearly show the operation of these forces, and also, as he himself states, because he is determined to demonstrate the worth of common life as subject-matter even for tragedy. Although naturalism is now often referred to as an outworn method, such naturalism as Hauptmann's can never be out of date: it will be appropriate whenever the dramatist treats material that naturally dictates such a method of expression.

The Rats, although not so well known as *The Weavers,* shares the fine qualities of that play and is characteristic of Hauptmann's practice. Both its strength and its weakness are obvious. In one light it is a propaganda play, in which Hauptmann attempts to vindicate his contention that the life of common persons furnishes matter as worthy of tragic treatment as the life of the great. To achieve this purpose he introduces, as a contrast to the major plot, a minor plot in which the old idea of tragedy is expounded by one of the old school. Hence, the play is, as Lewisohn states, "a naturalistic tragedy and, at the same time, its criticism and defence." But, although such an ill-assorted union of plots was doubtless essential to Hauptmann's purpose, the play fails to fuse successfully its two plots into one organic whole, and insofar fails to be a perfect work of art. But simply as a naturalistic tragedy of lowly life, yet universal in its humanity, the major plot, which has for its protagonist Mrs. John, is so superb in its power that it actually triumphs over the structural weakness of the play as a whole.

The first production of *The Rats* was given in Berlin in 1911. Apparently, the play has never been produced in either England or America.

CHARACTERS

HARRO HASSENREUTER, *formerly a theatrical manager*
MRS. HARRO HASSENREUTER
WALBURGA, *their daughter*
PASTOR SPITTA
ERICH SPITTA, *postulant for Holy Orders, his son*
ALICE RÜTTERBUSCH, *actress*
NATHANAEL JETTEL, *court actor*
KÄFERSTEIN, DR. KEGEL, } *Pupils of* HASSENREUTER
JOHN, *foreman-mason*
MRS. JOHN
BRUNO MECHELKE, *her brother*
PAULINE PIPERCARCKA, *a servant girl*
MRS. SIDONIE KNOBBE
SELMA, *her daughter*
QUAQUARO, *house-steward*
MRS. KIELBACKE
POLICEMAN SCHIERKE
TWO INFANTS

The action takes place in Berlin at the present day

THE RATS

ACT ONE

The attic of a former cavalry barracks in Berlin. A windowless room that receives all its light from a lamp which burns suspended over a round table. From the back wall opens a straight passage which connects the room with the outer door—a door with iron hasps and a primitive signal bell which any one desiring to enter rings by means of a bell rope. A door in the right wall leads to an adjoining room, one in the left wall leads to the stairs into the loft immediately under the roof. Into this store room, as well as into the space visible to the spectator, the former theatrical manager, HARRO HASSENREUTER, *has gathered his collection of properties. In the prevalent gloom it is difficult to decide whether the place is the armour room of an old castle, a museum of antiquities or the shop of a costumer. Stands with helmets and breastplates are put up on either side of the passage; a row of similar stands almost covers the two sides of the front room. The stairs wind upward between two mailed figures. At the head of the stairs is a wooden trapdoor. In the left foreground, against the wall, is a high desk. Ink, pens, old ledgers, a tall stool, as well as several chairs with tall backs and the round table make it clear that the room serves the purposes of an office. On the table is a decanter for water and several glasses; above the desk hang a number of photographs. These photographs represent* HASSENREUTER *in the part of Karl Moor (in Schiller's "Robbers"), as well as in a number of other parts. One of the mailed dummies wears a huge laurel wreath about its neck. The laurel wreath is tied with a riband which bears, in gilt letters, the following inscription: "To our gifted manager Hassenreuter, from his grateful colleagues." A series of enormous red bows shows the inscriptions: "To the inspired presenter of Karl Moor . . . To the incomparable, unforgettable Karl Moor" . . . etc., etc. The room is utilised as far as its space will permit for the storing of costumes. Wherever possible, German, Spanish and English garments of every age hang on hooks. Swedish riding boots, Spanish rapiers and German broadswords are scattered about. The door to the left bears the legend: Library. The whole room displays picturesque disorder. Trumpery of all kinds—weapons, goblets, cups—is scattered about. It is Sunday toward the end of May.*

At the table in the middle of the room are sitting, MRS. JOHN *(between thirty-five and forty) and a very young servant girl,* PAULINE PIPERCARCKA. PAULINE, *vulgarly overdressed—jacket, hat, sunshade—sits straight upright. Her pretty, round little face shows signs of long weeping. Her figure betrays the fact that she is approaching motherhood. She draws letters on the floor with the end of her sunshade.*

Mrs. John. Well, sure now! That's right! That's what I says, Pauline.

Pauline. All right. So I'm goin' to Schlachtensee or to Halensee. I gotta go and see if I c'n meet him!

[*She dries her tears and is about to rise.*]

Mrs. John. [*Prevents* PAULINE *from getting up.*] Pauline! For God's sake don't you be doin' that! Not that there, for nothin' in the world! That don't do nothin' but raise a row and cost money an' don't bring you in nothin'. Look at the condition you're in. An' that way you want to go an' run after that there low lived feller?

Pauline. Then my landlady c'n wait an' wait for me to-day. I'll jump into the Landwehr canal an' drownd myself.

Mrs. John. Pauline! An' what for? What for, I'd like to know? Now you just listen to me for a speck of a minute, just for God's sake, for the teeniest speck of one an' pay attention to what I'm goin' to propose to you! You know yourself how I says to you, out on Alexander square, right by the chronometer—says I to you right out, as I was comin' out o' the market an' sees your condition with half an eye: He don't want to acknowledge nothin', eh? That's

what I axed you right out!—That happens to many gals here, to all of 'em—to millions! An' then I says to you . . . what did I say? Come along, I says, an' I'll help you!

Pauline. O' course, I don't never dare to show myself at home lookin' this way. Mother, she'd cry it out at the first look. An' father, he'd knock my head against the wall an' throw me out in the street. An' I ain't got no more money left neither—nothin' but just two pieces o' gold that I got sewed up in the linin' o' my jacket. That feller didn't leave me no crown an' he didn't leave me no penny.

Mrs. John. Miss, my husband, he's a foreman-mason. I just wants you to pay attention . . . just for heaven's sake, pay attention to the propositions that I'm goin' to make to you. They'll help us both. You'll be helped out an' the same way I'll be. An' what's more, Paul, that's my husband, he'll be helped, because he'd like, for all the world, to have a child, an' our only one, little Adelbert, he went an' died o' the croup. Your child'll be as well taken care of as an own child. Then you c'n go an' you c'n look up your sweetheart an' you c'n go back into service an' home to your people, an' the child is well off, an' nobody in the world don't need to know nothin'.

Pauline. I'll do it just outa spite—that's what! An' drownd myself! [*She rises.*] An' a note, a note, I'll leave in my jacket, like this: You drove your Pauline to her death with your cursed meanness! An' then I'll put down his name in full: Alois Theophil Brunner, instrument-maker. Then he c'n see how he'll get along in the world with the murder o' me on his conscience.

Mrs. John. Wait a minute, Miss! I gotta unlock the door first.

[Mrs. John *acts as though she were about to conduct* Pauline *to the door.*]

[*Before the two women reach the passage,* Bruno Mechelke *enters with slow and suspicious demeanour by the door at the left and remains standing in the room.* Bruno *is short rather than tall, but with a powerful bull's neck and athletic shoulders. His forehead is low and receding, his close-clipped hair like a brush, his skull round and small. His face is brutal and his left nostril has been ripped open sometime and imperfectly healed. The fellow is about nineteen years old. He bends forward, and his great, lumpish hands are joined to muscular arms. The pupils of his eyes are small, black and piercing. He is trying to repair a rat trap.*]

[Bruno *whistles to his sister as he would to a dog.*]

Mrs. John. I'm comin' now, Bruno! What d'you want?

Bruno. [*Apparently absorbed by the trap.*] Thought I was goin' to put up traps here.

Mrs. John. Did you put the bacon in? [*To* Pauline.] It's only my brother. Don't be scared, Miss.

Bruno. [*As before.*] I seen the Emperor William to-day. I marched along wi' the guard.

Mrs. John. [*To* Pauline, *who stands fearful and moveless in* Bruno's *presence.*] 'Tain't nothin' but my brother. You c'n stay.—[*To* Bruno.] Boy, what're you lookin' that way for again? The young lady is fair scared o' you.

Bruno. [*As before, without looking up.*] Brrr-rr-rr! I'm a ghost.

Mrs. John. Hurry an' go up in the loft an' set your traps.

Bruno. [*Slowly approaching the table.*] Aw, that business ain't no good 'cept to starve on! When I goes to sell matches, I gets more outa it.

Pauline. Good-bye, Mrs. John.

Mrs. John. [*Raging at her brother.*] Are you goin' to leave me alone?

Bruno. [*Knuckling under.*] Aw, don't go on so. I'm leavin'.

[*Obediently he withdraws into the adjoining room.* Mrs. John *locks the door behind him with a determined gesture.*]

Pauline. That's a feller I wouldn't like to meet in the *Tiergarten.* Not by night an' not by day neither.

Mrs. John. If I sets Bruno on anyone an' he gets at him, God help him!

Pauline. Good-bye. I don't like this here place. If you wants to see me again, Mrs. John, I'd rather meet you at a bench on the Kreuzberg.

Mrs. John. Pauline, I brought up Bruno with sorrow and trouble by day an' by night. An' I'll be twenty times better to your child. So when it's born, Pauline, I'll take it, an' I swears to you by my father an' mother what died in the Lord an' what I goes to visit the graves of out in Rüdersdorf one Sunday a year an' puts candles on 'em an' don' let nobody keep me back—I swears to you that little crittur'll live on the fat o' the land just like a born prince nor a born princess couldn't be treated no better.

Pauline. I'm goin' and with my last penny I'm goin' to buy vitriol—I don't care who it hits! An' I'll throw it in the face o' the wench that he goes with . . . I don't care who it hits . . . right in the middle o' the mug. I don't care! It c'n burn up his fine-lookin' phiz! I don' care! It c'n burn off his beard an' burn out his eyes if he goes with other women! What did he do? Cheated me! Ruined me! Took my money! Robbed me o' my honour! That's what the damn' dog did—seduced me an' lied to me an' left me an' kicked me out into the world! I don't care who it hits! I wants him to be blind! I wants the stuff to burn his nose offa his face! I wants it to burn him offa the earth!

Mrs. John. Pauline, as I hopes to be happy hereafter, I tells you, from the minute where that there little one is born . . . it's goin' to be treated like . . . well, I don't know what! . . . as if it was born to be put in silks an' in satins. All you gotta do is to have some confidence—that's what! You just say: Yes. I got it all figgered out. It c'n be done, it c'n be done—that's what I tells you! An' no doctor an' no police an' no landlady don't has to know nothin'. An' then, first of all, you gets paid a hundred an' twenty crowns what I saved scrubbin' an' charrin' here for manager Hassenreuter.

Pauline. I might strangle it when it's born, rather'n sell it!

Mrs. John. Who's talkin' about sellin'?

Pauline. Look at the frights an' the misery I've stood from October las' to this very day. My intended gives me the go; my landlady puts me out! They gives me notice at a lodgin's. What does I do that I has to be despised an' cursed an' kicked aroun'?

Mrs. John. That's what I says. That's cause the devil is still gettin' the better of our Lord Jesus.

[*Unnoticed and busy with the trap as before* Bruno *has quietly re-entered by the door.*]

Bruno. [*With a strange intonation, sharply and yet carelessly.*] Lamps!

Pauline. That feller scares me. Lemme go!

Mrs. John. [*Makes violently for* Bruno.] Is you goin' to go where you belongs? I told you I'd call you!

Bruno. [*In the same tone as before.*] Well, Jette, I jus' said: Lamps!

Mrs. John. Are you crazy? What's the meanin' o' that—lamps?

Bruno. Ain't that a ringin' o' the front bell?

Mrs. John. [*Is frightened, listens and restrains* Pauline, *who makes a motion to go.*] Sh, Miss, wait! Just wait one little minute!

[Bruno *continues whittling as the two women stop to listen.*]

Mrs. John. [*Softly and in a frightened tone to* Bruno.] I don't hear nothin'!

Bruno. You ol' dried up piece! You better go an' get another pair o' ears!

Mrs. John. That'd be the first time in all the three months that the manager'd be comin' in when it's Sunday.

Bruno. If that there theayter feller comes, he c'n engage me right on the spot.

Mrs. John. [*Violently.*] Don' talk rot!

Bruno. [*Grinning at* Pauline.] Maybe you don' believe it, Miss, but I went an' took the clown's hoss at Schumann's circus aroun' the ring three times. Them's the kind o' things I does. An' is I goin' to be scared?

Pauline. [*Seeming to notice for the first time the fantastic strangeness of the place in which she finds herself. Frightened and genuinely perturbed.*] Mother o' God, what kind o' place is this?

Mrs. John. Whoever c'n that be?

Bruno. 'Tain't the manager, Jette! More like it's a spout what's drippin'!

Mrs. John. Miss, you be so kind an' go for two minutes, if you don' mind, up into this here loft. Maybe somebody's comin' that just wants some information.

[*In her growing terror* Pauline *does as she is asked to do. She clambers up the stairs to the loft, the trap-door being open.* Mrs.

JOHN *has taken up a position in which she can, at need, hide* PAULINE *from anyone entering the room.*]

[PAULINE *disappears:* MRS. JOHN *and* BRUNO *remain alone.*]

Bruno. What business has you with that pious mug?

Mrs. John. That ain't none o' your business, y'understan'?

Bruno. I was just axin' 'cause you was so careful that nobody should see her. Otherwise I don't know's I gives a damn.

Mrs. John. An' you ain't supposed to!

Bruno. Much obliged. Maybe I better toddle along, then.

Mrs. John. D'you know what you owes me, you scamp?

Bruno. [*Carelessly.*] What are you gettin' excited for? What is I doin' to you? What d'you want? I gotta go to my gal now. I'm sleepy. Las' night I slept under a lot o' bushes in the park. An' anyhow, I'm cleaned out— [*He turns his trousers pockets inside out.*] An' in consequence o' that I gotta go an' earn somethin'.

Mrs. John. Here you stays! Don't you dare move! If you do you c'n whine like a whipped purp an' you'll never be gettin' so much as a penny outa me no more— that's what you won't! Bruno, you're goin' ways you hadn't ought to.

Bruno. Aw, what d'you think? Is I goin' to be a dam' fool? D'you think I ain' goin' when I gets a good livin' offa Hulda? [*He pulls out a dirty card-case.*] Not so much as a measly pawn ticket has I got. Tell me what you want an' then lemme go!

Mrs. John. What I wants? Of you? What're you good for anyhow? You ain't good for nothin' excep' for your sister who ain't right in her head to feel sorry for you, you loafer an' scamp!

Bruno. Maybe you *ain'* right in your head sometimes!

Mrs. John. Our father, he used to say when you was no more'n five an' six years old an' used to do rowdy things, that we couldn't never be proud o' you an' that I might as well let you go hang. An' my husband what's a reel honest decent man . . . why, you can't be seen alongside of a good man like him.

Bruno. Sure, I knows all that there, Jette. But things ain' that easy to straighten out. I knows all right I was born with a kind o' a twist in my back, even if nobody don't see it. No, I wasn't born in no castle. Well, I gotto do what I c'n do with my twist. All right. What d'you want? 'Tain't for the rats you're keepin' me. You wanta hush up somethin' wi' that whore!

Mrs. John. [*Shaking her hand under* BRUNO's *nose.*] You give away one word o' this an' I'll kill you, I'll make a corpse o' you!

Bruno. Well now, looka here! I'm goin', y'understan'? [*He mounts the stairs.*] Maybe someday I'll be droppin' into good luck without knowin' it.

[*He disappears through the trap-door.* MRS. JOHN *hurriedly blows out the lamp and taps her way to the door of the library. She enters it but does not wholly close the door behind her.—The noise that* BRUNO *actually heard was that of a key being turned in a rusty keyhole. A light step is now heard approaching the door. For a moment the street noises of Berlin as well as the yelling of children in the outer halls had been audible. Strains of a hurdy-gurdy from the yard.—*WALBURGA HASSENREUTER *enters with hesitating and embarrassed steps. The girl is not yet sixteen and is pretty and innocent of appearance. Sunshade, light-coloured summer dress, not coming below the ankle.*]

Walburga. [*Halts, listens, then says nervously.*] Papa!—Isn't anyone up here yet? Papa! Papa! [*She listens long and intently and then says.*] Why, what an odour of coal oil there is here! [*She finds matches, lights one, is about to light the lamp and burns her fingers against the hot chimney.*] Ouch! Why, dear me! Who is here?

[*She has cried out and is about to run away.* MRS. JOHN *reappears.*]

Mrs. John. Well, Miss Walburga, who's goin' to go an' kick up a row like that! You c'n be reel quiet. 'Tain't nobody but me!

Walburga. Dear me, but I've had an awful fright, Mrs. John.

Mrs. John. Well, then I advise you to be gettin' out o' here to-day—on Sunday?

Walburga. [*Laying her hand over her heart.*] Why, my heart is almost standing still yet, Mrs. John.

Mrs. John. What's the matter, Miss Walburga? What's frightenin' you? You oughta know that from your pa that Sunday an' week day I gotta be workin' aroun' here with them boxes an' cases, dustin' an' tryin' to get rid o' the moths! An' then, after two or three weeks, when I've gone over the twelve or eighteen hundred theayter rags that're lyin' here—then I gotta start all over again.

Walburga. I was frightened because the chimney of the lamp was still quite hot to the touch.

Mrs. John. That's right. That there lamp was burnin' an' I put it out jus' a minute ago. [*She lifts up the chimney.*] It don't burn me; my hands is hard. [*She lights the wick.*] Well, now we has light. Now I lit it again. What's the danger here? I don' see nothin'.

Walburga. But you do look like a ghost, Mrs. John.

Mrs. John. How do you say I looks?

Walburga. Oh, it just seems so when one comes out of the vivid sunlight into the darkness, into these musty holes. It seems as though one were surrounded by ghosts.

Mrs. John. Well, you little ghost, why did you come up here? Is you alone or has you got somebody with you? Maybe papa'll be comin' in yet?

Walburga. No, papa has been granted an important audience out in Postdam to-day.

Mrs. John. All right! What're you lookin' for here then?

Walburga. I? Oh, I just came out for a walk!

Mrs. John. Well, then I advise you to be gettin' out o' here again. No sun don't shine into your papa's lumber-room.

Walburga. You look so grey! You had better go out into the sunlight yourself!

Mrs. John. Oh, the sunlight's for fine folks! All I needs is a couple o' pounds o' dust an' dirt on my lungs.—You just go along, missie! I gotta get to work. I don' need nothin' else. I jus' lives on mildew an' insec'-powder. [*She coughs.*]

Walburga. [*Nervously.*] You needn't tell papa that I was up here.

Mrs. John. Me? Ain't I got somethin' better to do'n that?

Walburga. [*With assumed carelessness.*] And if Mr. Spitta were to ask after me . . .

Mrs. John. Who?

Walburga. The young gentleman who gives us private lessons at home . . .

Mrs. John. Well, s'posin'?

Walburga. Then be so kind as to tell him that I've been here but left again at once.

Mrs. John. So I'm to tell Mr. Spitta but not papa?

Walburga. [*Involuntarily.*] Oh, for heaven's sake, no!

Mrs. John. Well, you jus' wait an' see! You jus' look out! There's many a one has looked like you an' has come from your part o' the city an'—has gone to the dogs in the ditch in Dragoner street or, even, behind Swedish hangin's in Barnim street.

Walburga. Surely you don't mean to insinuate, Mrs. John, and surely you don't believe that there's anything unpermitted or improper in my relations with Mr. Spitta?

Mrs. John. [*In extreme fright.*] Shut up! —Somebody's put the key into the keyhole.

Walburga. Blow out the lamp!

[Mrs. John *blows out the lamp quickly.*]

Walburga. Papa!

Mrs. John. Miss! Up into the loft with you!

[Mrs. John *and* Walburga *both disappear through the trap-door, which closes behind them.*]

[*Two gentlemen, the manager* Harro Hassenreuter *and the court actor* Nathanael Jettel, *appear in the frame of the outer door. The manager is of middle height, clean shaven, fifty years old. He takes long steps and shows a lively temperament in his whole demeanour. The cut of his face is noble, his eyes have a vivid, adventurous expression. His behaviour is somewhat noisy, which accords with his thoroughly fiery nature. He wears a light overcoat, a top-hat thrust back on his head, full dress suit and patent leather boots. The overcoat,*

which is unbuttoned, reveals the decorations which almost cover his chest.—Jettel wears a suit of flannels under a very light spring overcoat. In his left hand he holds a straw hat and an elegant cane; he wears tan shoes. He also is clean shaven and over fifty years old.]

Hassenreuter. [*Calls.*] John! Mrs. John! —Well, now you see my catacombs, my dear fellow! *Sic transit gloria mundi!* Here I've stored everything—*mutatis mutandis*—that was left of my whole theatrical glory—trash, trash! Old rags! Old tatters! —John! John! She's been here, for the lamp chimney is still quite hot! [*He strikes a match and lights the lamp.*] *Fiat lux, pereat mundus!* Now you can get a good view of my paradise of moths and rats and fleas!

Jettel. You received my card, didn't you, my dear manager?

Hassenreuter. Mrs. John!—I'll see if she is in the loft up there. [*He mounts the stairs and rattles at the trap-door.*] Locked! And of course the wretched creature has the key tied to her apron. [*He beats enragedly against the trap-door with his fist.*] John! John!

Jettel. [*Somewhat impatient.*] Can't we manage without this Mrs. John?

Hassenreuter. What? Do you think that I, in my dress suit and with all my decorations, just back from His Highness, can go through my three hundred boxes and cases just to rout out the wretched rags that you are pleased to need for your engagement here?

Jettel. I beg your pardon. But I'm not wont to appear in rags on my tours.

Hassenreuter. Man alive, then play in your drawers for all I care! It wouldn't worry me! Only don't quite forget who's standing before you. Because the court actor Jettel is pleased to emit a whistle—well, that's no reason why the manager Harro Hassenreuter should begin to dance. Confound it, because some comedian wants a shabby turban or two old boots, is that any reason why a *pater familias* like myself must give up his only spare time at home on Sunday afternoon? I suppose you expect me to creep about on all fours into the corners here? No, my good fellow, for that kind of thing you'll have to look elsewhere!

Jettel. [*Quite calmly.*] Would you mind telling me, if possible, who has been treading on your corns?

Hassenreuter. My boy, it's scarcely an hour since I had my legs under the same table with a prince: *post hoc, ergo propter hoc!* —On your account I got into a confounded 'bus and drove out to this confounded hole, and so . . . if you don't know how to value my kindness, you can get out!

Jettel. You made an appointment with me for four o'clock. Then you let me wait one solid hour in this horrible tenement, in these lovely halls with their filthy brats! Well, I waited and didn't address the slightest reproach to you. And now you have the good taste and the good manners to use me as a kind of a cuspidor!

Hassenreuter. My boy . . .

Jettel. The devil! I'm not your boy! You seem to be kind of a clown that I ought to force to turn somersaults for pennies! [*Highly indignant, he picks up his hat and cane and goes.*]

Hassenreuter. [*Starts, breaks out into boisterous laughter and then calls out after* JETTEL.] Don't make yourself ridiculous! And, anyhow, I'm not a costumer!

[*The slamming of the outer door is heard.*]

Hassenreuter. [*Pulls out his watch.*] The confounded idiot! The damned mutton head.—It's a blessing the ridiculous ass went! [*He puts the watch back into his pocket, pulls it out again at once and listens. He walks restlessly to and fro, then stops, gazes into his top-hat, which contains a mirror, and combs his hair carefully. He walks over to the middle door and opens a few of the letters that lie heaped up there. At the same time he sings in a trilling voice:*]

"O Strassburg, O Strassburg,
Thou beautiful old town."

[*Once more he looks at his watch. Suddenly the doorbell at his head rings.*] On the minute! Ah, but these little girls can be punctual when they really care about it! [*He hurries out into the hall and is heard to extend a loud and merry welcome to someone. The trumpet notes of his voice are soon accompanied by the bell-like tones of a woman's speaking. Very soon he reap-*

pears, at his side an elegant young lady, ALICE RÜTTERBUSCH.]—Alice! My little Alice! Come here where I can see you, little girl! Come here into the light! I must see whether you're the same infinitely delightful, mad little Alice that you were in the great days of my career in Alsace? Girl, it was I who taught you to walk! I held your leading strings for your first steps. I taught you how to talk, girl! The things you said! I hope you haven't forgotten!

Alice Rütterbusch. Now, look here! You don't believe that I'm an ungrateful girl?

Hassenreuter. [*Draws up her veil.*] Why, girlie, you've grown younger instead of older.

Alice Rütterbusch. [*Flushed with delight.*] Well, a person would just have to lie like everything to say that you had changed to your disadvantage! But, do you know—it's awful dark up here really and—Harro, maybe you wouldn't mind opening a window a little—oh, the air's a bit heavy, too.

Hassenreuter. "Pillicock sat on Pillicock-hill."

"But mice and rats and such small deer
Have been Tom's food for seven long year."

In all seriousness I have passed through dark and difficult times! In spite of the fact that I preferred not to write you of it, I have no doubt that you are informed.

Alice Rütterbusch. But is wasn't extra friendly, you know, for you not to answer one little word to the long, nice letter I wrote you.

Hassenreuter. Ha, ha, ha! What's the use of answering a little girl's letter if one has both hands full taking care of oneself and can't possibly be of the slightest use to her? Pshaw! *E nihilo nihil fit!* In the vernacular: You can't get results out of nothing! Moth and dust! Dust and moths! And that's all my efforts for the German culture in the west profited me!

Alice Rütterbusch. So you didn't turn over your collection of properties to manager Kunz.

Hassenreuter. "O Strassburg, O Strassburg, Thou beautiful old town!"

No, little one, I didn't leave my properties in Strassburg! This ex-waiter, ex-innkeeper and lessee of disreputable dance halls, this idiot, this imbecile who succeeded me, didn't happen to want my stuff. No, I didn't leave my collection of properties there, but what I did have to leave there was forty thousand crowns of hard-earned money left me from my old touring days as an actor, and, in addition, fifty thousand crowns which formed the dowry of my excellent wife. However, it was a piece of good luck, after all, that I kept the properties. Ha, ha, ha! These fellows here . . . [*he touches one of the mailed figures*] . . . surely you remember them?

Alice Rütterbusch. Could I forget my pasteboard knights?

Hassenreuter. Very well, then: it was these pasteboard knights and all the other trash that surrounds them, that actually, after his hegira, kept the old rag-picker and costumer, Harro Eberhard Hassenreuter, above water. But let's speak of cheerful things: I saw with pleasure in the paper that his Excellency has engaged you for Berlin.

Alice Rütterbusch. I don't care a great deal about it! I'd rather play for you, and you must promise me, whenever you undertake the management of a theatre again—you will promise, won't you?—that you'll let me break my contract right away? [*The* MANAGER *laughs heartily.*] I had to be annoyed quite enough for three long years by the barn-stormers of the provinces. Berlin I don't like, and a court theatre least of all. Lord, what people and what a profession it is! You know I belong to your collection—I've always belonged to it! [*She stands up primly among the pasteboard knights.*]

Hassenreuter. Ha, ha, ha, ha! Well then, come to my arms, faithful knight! [*He opens his arms wide, she flies into them, and they now salute each other with long, continuous kisses.*]

Alice Rütterbusch. Go on, Harro. Now tell me. How is your wife?

Hassenreuter. Teresa gets along very well except that she gets fatter every day in spite of sorrow and worries.—Girl, girl, how fragrant you are! [*He presses her to him.*] Do you know that you're a devilish dangerous person?

Alice Rütterbusch. D'you think I'm an idiot? Of course I'm dangerous!

Hassenreuter. Well, I'll be . . . !

Alice Rütterbusch. Why, do you think if I didn't know it was dangerous, dangerous

for us both, I'd make an appointment with you out here in this lovely neighbourhood, under this stuffy roof? By the way, though, since I'm always bound to have the queerest luck if ever I do go a bit on questionable ways, whom should I meet on the stairs but Nathanael Jettel? I almost ran into the gentleman's arms! He'll take good care that my visiting you doesn't remain our secret.

Hassenreuter. I must have made a mistake in writing down the date. The fellow insists on asserting—ha, ha, ha!—that I made an engagement with him for this very afternoon.

Alice Rütterbusch. And that wasn't the only person I met on the six flights. And as for the dear little children that roll about on the stairs here! What they called out after me was unparliamentary to a degree—such vulgarities as I've never heard from such little beggars in my life.

Hassenreuter. [*Laughs, then speaks seriously.*] Ah, yes! But one gets accustomed to that. You could never write down all the life that sweeps down these stairs with its soiled petticoats—the life that cringes and creeps, moans, sighs, sweats, cries out, curses, mutters, hammers, planes, jeers, steals, drives its dark trades up and down these stairs—the sinister creatures that hide here, playing their zithers, grinding their accordions, sticking in need and hunger and misery, leading their vicious lives—no, it's beyond one's power of recording. And your old manager, last but not least, runs, groans, sighs, sweats, cries out and curses with the best of them. Ha, ha, ha, girlie! I've had a pretty wretched time.

Alice Rütterbusch. Oh, by the way, d'you know whom I ran into just as I was making for the railroad station at the Zoölogical Garden? The good old Prince Statthalter! And straight off, cool as a cucumber—that's my way you know—I tripped along next to him for twenty minutes and got him absorbed in a conversation. And then something happened, Harro, upon my honour, just as I'm going to tell you—literally and truly: Suddenly on the bridle-path His Majesty came riding along with a great suite. I thought I'd sink into the earth with embarrassment. And His Majesty laughed right out and threatened His Serenity playfully with his finger. But I was delighted, you may believe me. The main thing comes now, however. Just think! His Serenity asked me whether I'd be glad to go back to Strassburg if the manager Hassenreuter were to assume direction of the theatre there again. Well, you may know that I almost jumped for joy!

Hassenreuter. [*Throws off his overcoat and stands with his decorations displayed.*] You probably couldn't help noticing that His Serenity had had a most excellent breakfast. Aha! We had breakfast together! We attended an exquisite little stag party given by Prince Ruprecht out in Potsdam. I don't deny, therefore, that a turn for good may take place in the miserable fate of your friend.

Alice Rütterbusch. Sweetheart, you look like a statesman, like an ambassador!

Hassenreuter. Ah, don't you know this breast covered with high and exalted decorations? Klärchen and Egmont! Here you can drink your fill! [*They embrace each other anew.*] *Carpe diem!* Enjoy the passing hour! Ah, my little Miss Simplicity, champagne is not recorded at present on the repertory of your old manager, inspirer and friend. [*He opens a wooden case and draws forth a bottle of wine.*] But this old cloister vintage isn't to be sneezed at either! [*He pulls the cork. At the same moment the door bell rings.*] What? Sh! I wonder who has the monstrous impudence to ring here on Sunday afternoon? [*The bell rings with increased violence.*] Confound it all—the fellow must be a lunatic. Little girl, suppose you withdraw into the library. [*Alice hurries into the library. The ringing is repeated. He hurries to the door.*] Either be patient or go to the devil. [*He is heard opening the door.*] Who? What? "It is I, Miss Walburga." What? I am not Miss Walburga. I am not the daughter. I am the father. Oh, it's you, Mr. Spitta! Your very humble servant. I'm only her father—only her father! What is it that you want?

[Hassenreuter *reappears in the passage accompanied by* Erich Spitta, *a young man of twenty-one, spectacled, with keen and not undistinguished features.* Spitta *passes as a student of theology and is correspondingly dressed. He does not hold himself erect*

and his development shows the influence of overstudy and underfeeding.]

Hassenreuter. Did you intend to give my daughter one of your private lessons here in my storeroom?

Spitta. I was riding past on the tram-car and I really thought I had seen Miss Walburga hurry into the doorway downstairs.

Hassenreuter. No possibility of such a thing, my dear Spitta. At this moment my daughter Walburga is attending a ritualistic service with her mother in the Anglican church.

Spitta. Then perhaps you'll forgive my intrusion. I took the liberty of coming upstairs because I thought that Miss Walburga might not find it unpleasant or useless to have an escort home through this neighbourhood.

Hassenreuter. Very good! Very excellent! But she isn't here. I regret it. I'm here myself by the merest chance—on account of the mail. And in addition, I have other pressing engagements. Can I do anything else for you?

[SPITTA *polishes his glasses and betrays signs of embarrassment.*]

Spitta. One doesn't grow used to the darkness at once.

Hassenreuter. Perhaps you stand in need of the tuition due you. Sorry, but unfortunately I have the habit of going out with only some small change in my waistcoat pocket. So I must ask you to have patience until I am at home again.

Spitta. Not the least hurry in the world.

Hassenreuter. Yes, it's easy for you to say that. I'm like a hunted animal, my dear fellow . . .

Spitta. And yet I would like to beg for a minute of your precious time. I can't but look upon this unexpected meeting as a kind of providential arrangement. In short: may I put a question to you?

Hassenreuter. [*With his eyes on his watch, which he has just been winding.*] One minute exactly. By the watch, my good fellow!

Spitta. Both my question and your answer need hardly take that long.

Hassenreuter. Well, then!

Spitta. Have I any talent for the stage?

Hassenreuter. For the love of God, man! Have you gone mad?—Forgive me, my dear fellow, if a case like this excites me to the point of being discourteous. You have certainly given the lie to the saying: *natura non facit saltus* by the unnatural leap that you've taken. I must first get my breath after that! And now let's put an end to this at once. Believe me, if we were both to discuss the question now we wouldn't come to any conclusion in two or three weeks, or rather let us say years.—You are a theologian by profession, my good fellow, and you were born in a parsonage. You have all the necessary connections and a smooth road to a comfortable way of life ahead of you. How did you hit upon such a notion as this?

Spitta. That's a long story of the inner life, Mr. Hassenreuter, of difficult spiritual struggles—a story which, until this moment, has been an absolute secret and known only to myself. But my good fortune led me into your house and from that moment on I felt that I was drawing nearer and nearer to the true aim of my life.

Hassenreuter. [*Wildly impatient.*] That's very creditable to me; that does honour to my family and myself! [*He puts his hands on* SPITTA'S *shoulders.*] And yet I must make it in the form of an urgent request that, at this moment, you refrain from a further discussion of the question. My affairs cannot wait.

Spitta. Then I will only add the expression of my absolutely firm decision.

Hassenreuter. But, my dear Spitta, who has put these mad notions into your head? I've taken real pleasure in the thought of you. I've really been quietly envying you the peaceful parsonage that was to be yours. I've attached no special significance to certain literary ambitions that one is likely to pick up in the metropolis. That's a mere phase, I thought, and will be quite passing in his case! And now you want to become an actor? God help you, were I your father! I'd lock you up on bread and water and not let you out again until the very memory of this folly was gone. *Dixi!* And now, good-bye, my dear man.

Spitta. I'm afraid that locking me up or resorting to force of any kind would not help in my case at all.

Hassenreuter. But, man alive, you want to become an actor—you, with your round shoulders, with your spectacles and, above

all, with your hoarse and sharp voice. It's impossible.

Spitta. If such fellows as I exist in real life, why shouldn't they exist on the stage too? And I am of the opinion that a smooth, well-sounding voice, probably combined with the Goethe-Schiller-Weimar school of idealistic artifice, is harmful rather than helpful. The only question is whether you would take me, just as I am, as a pupil?

Hassenreuter. [*Hastily draws on his overcoat.*] I would not. In the first place my school of acting is only one of the schools of idealistic artifice which you mention. In the second place I wouldn't be responsible to your father for such an action. And in the third place, we quarrel enough as it is —every time you stay to supper at my house after giving your lessons. If you were my pupil, we'd come to blows. And now, Spitta, I must catch the car.

Spitta. My father is already informed. In a letter of twelve pages, I have given him a full history of the change that has taken place within me . . .

Hassenreuter. I'm sure the old gentleman will feel flattered! And now come along with me or I'll go insane!

[Hassenreuter *forcibly takes* Spitta *out with him. The door is heard to slam. The room grows silent but for the uninterrupted roar of Berlin, which can now be clearly heard. The trap-door to the loft is now opened and* Walburga Hassenreuter *clambers down in mad haste, followed by* Mrs. John.]

Mrs. John. [*Whispering vehemently.*] What's the matter? Nothin' ain't happened.

Walburga. Mrs. John, I'll scream! I'll have to scream in another second! Oh, for heaven's sake, I can't help it much longer, Mrs. John!

Mrs. John. Stuff a handkerchief between your teeth! There ain't nothin'! Why d'you take on so?

Walburga. [*With chattering teeth, making every effort to suppress her sobs.*] I'm frightened! Oh, I'm frightened to death, Mrs. John!

Mrs. John. I'd like to know what you're so scared about!

Walburga. Why, didn't you see that horrible man?

Mrs. John. That ain't nothin' so horrible. That's my brother what sometimes helps me clean up your pa's things here.

Walburga. And that girl who sits with her back to the chimney and whines?

Mrs. John. Well, your mother didn't act no different when you was expected to come into the world.

Walburga. Oh, it's all over with me. I'll die if papa comes back.

Mrs. John. Well then hurry and get out an' don' fool roun' no more!

[Mrs. John *accompanies the horrified girl along the passage, lets her out, and then returns.*]

Mrs. John. Thank God, that girl don' know but what the moon *is* made o' cheese!

[*She takes the uncorked bottle, pours out a glass full of wine and takes it with her to the loft into which she disappears. The room is scarcely empty when* Hassenreuter *returns.*]

Hassenreuter. [*Still in the door. Singing.*] "Come on down, O Madonna Teresa!" [*He calls.*] Alice! [*Still in the door.*] Come on! Help me put up my iron bar with a double lock before the door. Alice! [*He comes forward.*] Any one else who dares to interrupt our Sunday quiet —— *anathema sit!* Here! You imp! Where are you, Alice? [*He observes the bottle and lifts it against the light.*] What? Half empty! The little scamp! [*From behind the door of the library a pleasant woman's voice is heard singing coloratura passages.*] Ha, ha, ha, ha! Heavens and earth! She's tipsy already.

ACT TWO

Mrs. John's *rooms on the second floor of the same house in the attics of which* Hassenreuter *has stored his properties. A high, deep, green-tinted room which betrays its original use as part of a barracks. The rear wall shows a double door which gives on the outer hall. Above this door there hangs a bell connected by a wire with the knob outside. To the right of the door a partition, covered with wall-paper, projects into the room. This partition takes a rectangular turn and extends to the right wall. A portion of the room is thus partitioned off and serves as sleeping-chamber. From*

within the partition, which is about six feet high, cupboards are seen against the wall.

Entering the room from the hall, one observes to the left a sofa covered with oil-cloth. The back of the sofa is pushed against the partition wall. The latter is adorned with small photographs: the foreman-mason JOHN *as a soldier,* JOHN *and his wife in their wedding garb, etc. An oval table, covered with a faded cotton cloth, stands before the sofa. In order to reach the entrance of the sleeping-chamber from the door it is necessary to pass the table and sofa. This entrance is closed by hangings of blue cotton cloth. Against the narrow front wall of the partition stands a neatly equipped kitchen cabinet. To the right, against the wall of the main room, the stove. This corner of the room serves the purposes of kitchen and pantry. Sitting on the sofa one would look straight at the left wall of the room, which is broken by two large windows. A neatly planed board has been fastened to the nearer of the windows to serve as a kind of desk. Upon it are lying blue-prints, counter-drawings, an inch-measure, a compass and a square. A small, raised platform is seen beneath the farther window. Upon it stands a small table with glasses. An old easy chair of cane and a number of simple wooden chairs complete the frugal equipment of the room, which creates an impression of neatness and orderliness such as is often found in the dwellings of childless couples.*

It is about five o'clock of an afternoon toward the end of May. The warm sunlight shines through the windows.

The foreman-mason JOHN, *a good-natured, bearded man of forty, sits at the desk in the foreground taking notes from the building plans.*

MRS. JOHN *sits sewing on the small platform by the farther window. She is very pale. There is something gentle and pain-touched about her, but her face shows an expression of deep contentment, which is broken only now and then by a momentary gleam of restlessness and suspense. A neat new perambulator stands by her side. In it lies a newborn child.*

John. [*Modestly.*] Mother, how'd it be if I was to open the window jus' a speck an' was to light my pipe for a bit?

Mrs. John. Does you have to smoke? If not, you better let it be!

John. No, I don't has to, mother. Only I'd like to! Never mind, though. A quid'll be just as good in the end. [*With comfortable circumstantiality he prepares a new quid.*]

Mrs. John. [*After a brief silence.*] How's that? You has to go to the public registry office again?

John. That's what he told me, that I had to come back again an' tell him exackly . . . that I had to give the exack place an' time when that little kid was born.

Mrs. John. [*Holding a needle in her mouth.*] Well, why didn't you tell him that right away?

John. How was I to know it? I didn't know, you see.

Mrs. John. You didn't know that?

John. Well, I wasn't here, was I?

Mrs. John. You wasn't. That's right. If you goes an' leaves me here in Berlin an' stays from one year's end to another in Hamburg, an' at most comes to see me once a month—how is you to know what happens in your own home?

John. Don't you want me to go where the boss has most work for me? I goes where I c'n make good money.

Mrs. John. I wrote you in my letter as how our little boy was born in this here room.

John. I knows that an' I told him that. Ain't that natural, I axes him, that the child was born in our room? An' he says that ain't natural at all. Well then, says I, for all I cares, maybe it was up in the loft with the rats an' mice! I got mad like 'cause he said maybe the child wasn't born here at all. Then he yells at me: What kind o' talk is that? What? says I. I takes an interest in wages an' earnin' an' not in talk—not me, Mr. Registrar! An' now I'm to give him the exack day an' hour . . .

Mrs. John. An' didn't I write it all out for you on a bit o' paper?

John. When a man's mad he's forgetful. I believe if he'd up and axed me: Is you Paul John, foreman-mason? I'd ha' answered: I don't know. Well an' then I'd been a bit jolly too an' taken a drink or two with Fritz. An' while we was doin' that who comes along but Schubert an' Karl an' they says as how I has to set up on account

o' bein' a father now. Those fellers, they didn't let me go an' they was waitin' downstairs in front o' the public registry. An' so I kept thinkin' o' them standin' there. So when he axes me on what day my wife was delivered, I didn't know nothin' an' just laughed right in his face.

Mrs. John. I wish you'd first attended to what you had to an' left your drinkin' till later.

John. It's easy to say that! But if you're up to them kind o' tricks in your old age, mother, you can't blame me for bein' reel glad.

Mrs. John. All right. You go on to the registry now an' say that your child was borne by your wife in your dwellin' on the twenty-fifth o' May.

John. Wasn't it on the twenty-sixth? 'Cause I said right along the twenty-sixth. Then he must ha' noticed that I wasn't quite sober. So he says: If that's a fac', all right; if not, you gotta come back.

Mrs. John. In that case you'd better leave it as it is.

[*The door is opened and* SELMA KNOBBE *pushes in a wretched perambulator which presents the saddest contrast to* MRS. JOHN'S. *Swaddled in pitiful rags a newly born child lies therein.*]

Mrs. John. Oh, no, Selma, comin' into my room with that there sick child—that was all right before. But that can't be done no more.

Selma. He just gasps with that cough o' his'n. Over at our place they smokes all the time.

Mrs. John. I told you, Selma, that you could come from time to time and get milk or bread. But while my little Adelbert is here an' c'n catch maybe consumption or somethin', you just leave that poor little thing at home with his fine mother.

Selma. [*Tearfully.*] Mother ain't been home at all yesterday or to-day. I can't get no sleep with this child. He just moans all night. I gotta get some sleep sometime! I'll jump outa the window first thing or I'll let the baby lie in the middle o' the street an' run away so no policeman can't never find me!

John. [*Looks at the strange child.*] Looks bad! Mother, why don't you try an' do somethin' for the little beggar?

Mrs. John. [*Pushing* SELMA *and the perambulator out determinedly.*] March outa this room. That can't be done, Paul. When you got your own you can't be lookin' out for other people's brats. That Knobbe woman c'n look after her own affairs. It's different with Selma. [*To the girl.*] You c'n come in when you want to. You c'n come in here after a while an' take a nap even. [*She closes the door.*]

John. You used to take a good deal o' interest in Knobbe's dirty little brats.

Mrs. John. You don' understan' that. I don' want our little Adelbert to be catchin' sore eyes or convulsions or somethin' like that.

John. Maybe you're right. Only, don't go an' call him Adelbert, mother. That ain't a good thing to do, to call a child by the same name as one that was carried off, unbaptised, a week after it was born. Let that be, mother. I can't stand for that, mother.

[*A knocking is heard at the door.* JOHN *is about to open.*]

Mrs. John. What's that?

John. Well, somebody wants to get in!

Mrs. John. [*Hastily turning the key in the lock.*] I ain't goin' to have everybody runnin' in on me now that I'm sick as this. [*She listens at the door and then calls out.*] I can't open! What d'you want?

A Woman's Voice. [*Somewhat deep and mannish in tone.*] It is Mrs. Hassenreuter.

Mrs. John. [*Surprised.*] Goodness gracious! [*She opens the door.*] I beg your pardon, Mrs. Hassenreuter! I didn't even know who it was!

[MRS. HASSENREUTER *has now entered, followed by* WALBURGA. *She is a colossal, asthmatic lady over fifty.* WALBURGA *is dressed with greater simplicity than in the first act. She carries a rather large package.*]

Mrs. Hassenreuter. How do you do, Mrs. John? Although climbing stairs is . . . very hard for me . . . I wanted to see how everything . . . goes with you after the . . . yes, the very happy event.

Mrs. John. I'm gettin' along again kind o' half way.

Mrs. Hassenreuter. That is probably your husband, Mrs. John? Well, one must say, one is bound to say, that your dear wife, in the long time of waiting—never com-

plained, was always cheery and merry, and did her work well for my husband upstairs.

John. That's right. She was mighty glad, too.

Mrs. Hassenreuter. Well, then we'll have the pleasure—at least, your wife will have the pleasure of seeing you at home oftener than heretofore.

Mrs. John. I has a good husband, Mrs. Hassenreuter, who takes care o' me an' has good habits. An' because Paul was workin' out o' town you mustn't think there was any danger o' his leavin' me. But a man like that, where his brother has a boy o' twelve in the non-commissioned officer's school . . . it's no kind of life for him havin' no children o' his own. He gets to thinkin' queer thoughts. There he is in Hamburg, makin' good money, an' he has the chance every day and—well—then he takes a notion, maybe, he'd like to go to America.

John. Oh, that was never more'n a thought.

Mrs. John. Well, you see, with us poor people . . . it's hard-earned bread that we eats . . . an' yet . . . [*lightly she runs her hand through John's hair*] even if there's one more an' you has more cares on that account—you see how the tears is runnin' down his cheeks—well, he's mighty happy anyhow!

John. That's because three years ago we had a little feller an' when he was a week old he took sick an' died.

Mrs. Hassenreuter. My husband has already . . . yes, my husband did tell me about that . . . how deeply you grieved over that little son of yours. You know how it is . . . you know how my good husband has his eyes and his heart open to everything. And if it's a question of people who are about him or who give him their services—then everything good or bad, yes, everything good or bad that happens to them, seems just as though it had happened to himself.

Mrs. John. I mind as if it was this day how he sat in the carriage that time with the little child's coffin on his knees. He wouldn't let the gravedigger so much as touch it.

John. [*Wiping the moisture out of his eyes.*] That's the way it was. No. I couldn't let him do that.

Mrs. Hassenreuter. Just think, to-day at the dinner-table we had to drink wine—suddenly, to drink wine! Wine! For years and years the city-water in decanters has been our only table drink . . . absolutely the only one. Dear children, said my husband.—You know that he had just returned from an eleven or twelve day trip to Alsace. Let us drink, my husband said, the health of my good and faithful Mrs. John, because . . . he cried out in his beautiful voice . . . because she is a visible proof of the fact that the cry of a mother heart is not indifferent to our Lord. —And so we drank your health, clinking our glasses! Well, and here I'm bringing you at my husband's special . . . at his very special and particular order . . . an apparatus for the sterilisation of milk.—Walburga, you may unpack the boiler.

[HASSENREUTER *enters unceremoniously through the outer door which has stood ajar. He wears a top-hat, spring overcoat, carries a silver-headed cane, in a word, is gotten up in his somewhat shabby week-day outfit. He speaks hastily and almost without pauses.*]

Hassenreuter. [*Wiping the sweat from his forehead.*] Berlin is hot, ladies and gentlemen, hot! And the cholera is as near as St. Petersburg! Now you've complained to my pupils, Spitta and Käferstein, Mrs. John, that your little one doesn't seem to gain in weight. Now, of course, it's one of the symptoms of the general decadence of our age that the majority of mothers are either unwilling to nurse their offspring or incapable of it. But you've already lost one child on account of diarrhoea, Mrs. John. No, there's no help for it: we must call a spade a spade. And so, in order that you do not meet with the same misfortune over again, or fall into the hands of old women whose advice is usually quite deadly for an infant—in order that these things may not happen, I say, I have caused my wife to bring you this apparatus. I've brought up all my children, Walburga included, by the help of such an apparatus . . . Aha! So one gets a glimpse of you again, Mr. John! Bravo! The emperor needs soldiers, and you needed a representative of your race! So I congratulate you

with all my heart. [*He shakes* JOHN'S *hand vigorously.*]

Mrs. Hassenreuter. [*Leaning over the infant.*] How much . . . how much did he weigh at birth?

Mrs. John. He weighed exactly eight pounds and ten ounces.

Hassenreuter. [*With noisy joviality.*] Ha, ha, ha! A vigorous product, I must say! Eight pounds and ten ounces of good healthy, German national flesh!

Mrs. Hassenreuter. Look at his eyes! And his little nose! His father over again! Why, the little fellow is really, really, the very image of you, Mr. John.

Hassenreuter. I trust that you will have the boy received into the communion of the Christian Church.

Mrs. John. [*With happy impressiveness.*] Oh, he'll be christened properly, right in the parochial church at the font by a clergyman.

Hassenreuter. Right! And what are his baptismal names to be?

Mrs. John. Well, you know the way men is. That's caused a lot o' talk. I was thinkin' o' "Bruno," but he won't have it!

Hassenreuter. Surely Bruno isn't a bad name.

John. That may be. I ain't sayin' but what Bruno is a good enough name. I don't want to give no opinion about that.

Mrs. John. Why don't you say as how I has a brother what's twelve years younger'n me an' what don't always do just right? But that's only 'cause there's so much temptation. That boy's a good boy. Only you won't believe it.

John. [*Turns red with sudden rage.*] Jette . . . you know what a cross that feller was to us! What d'you want? You want our little feller to be the namesake of a man what's—I can't help sayin' it—what's under police soopervision?

Hassenreuter. Then, for heaven's sake, get him some other patron saint.

John. Lord protect me from sich! I tried to take an interest in Bruno! I got him a job in a machine-shop an' didn't get nothin' outa it but annoyance an' disgrace! God forbid that he should come aroun' an' have anythin' to do with this little feller o' mine. [*He clenches his fist.*] If that was to happen, Jette, I wouldn't be responsible for myself!

Mrs. John. You needn't go on, Paul! Bruno ain't comin'. But I c'n tell you this much for certain, that my brother was good an' helpful to me in this hard time.

John. Why didn't you send for me?

Mrs. John. I didn't want no man aroun' that was scared.

Hassenreuter. Aren't you an admirer of Bismarck, John?

John. [*Scratching the back of his head.*] I can't say as to that exackly. My brothers in the masons' union, though, they ain't admirers o' him.

Hassenreuter. Then you have no German hearts in your bodies! Otto is what I called my eldest son who is in the imperial navy! And believe me [*pointing to the infant*] this coming generation will well know what it owes to that mighty hero, the great forger of German unity! [*He takes the tin boiler of the apparatus which* WALBURGA *has unpacked into his hands and lifts it high up.*] Now then: the whole business of this apparatus is mere child's play. This frame which holds all the bottles—each bottle to be filled two-thirds with water and one-third with milk—is sunk into the boiler which is filled with boiling water. By keeping the water at the boiling-point for an hour and a half in this manner, the content of the bottles becomes free of germs. Chemists call this process sterilisation.

John. Jette, at the master-mason's house, the milk that's fed to the twins is sterilised too.

[*The pupils of* HASSENREUTER, KÄFERSTEIN *and* DR. KEGEL, *two young men between twenty and twenty-five years of age, have knocked at the door and then opened it.*]

Hassenreuter. [*Noticing his pupils.*] Patience, gentlemen. I'll be with you directly. At the moment I am busying myself with the problems of the nourishment of infants and the care of children.

Käferstein. [*His head bears witness to a sharply defined character: large nose, pale, a serious expression, beardless; about the mouth a flicker of kindly mischievousness. With hollow voice, gentle and suppressed.*] You must know that we are the three kings out of the East.

Hassenreuter. [*Who still holds the apparatus aloft in his hands.*] What are you?

Käferstein. [*As before.*] We want to adore the babe.

Hassenreuter. Ha, ha, ha, ha! If you are the kings out of the East, gentlemen, it seems to me that the third of you is lacking.

Käferstein. The third is our new fellow pupil in the field of dramaturgic activity, the *studiosus theologiæ,* who is detained at present at the corner of Blumen and Wallnertheater streets by an accident partly sociological, partly psychological in its nature.

Dr. Kegel. We made all possible haste to escape.

Hassenreuter. Do you see, a star stands above this house, Mrs. John! But do tell me, has our excellent Spitta once more made some public application of his quackery for the healing of the so-called sins of the social order? Ha, ha, ha, ha! *Semper idem!* Why, that fellow is actually becoming a nuisance!

Käferstein. A crowd gathered in the street for some reason and it seems that he discovered a friend in the midst of it.

Hassenreuter. According to my unauthoritative opinion this young Spitta would have done much better as a surgeon's assistant or Salvation Army officer. But that's the way of the world: the fellow must needs want to be an actor.

Mrs. Hassenreuter. Mr. Spitta, the children's tutor, wants to become an actor?

Hassenreuter. That is exactly the plan he has proposed to me, mama.—But now, if you bring incense and myrrh, dear Käferstein, out with them! You observe what a many sided man your teacher is. Now I help my pupils, thirsty after the contents of the Muses' breasts, to the nourishment they desire—*nutrimentum spiritus*—again I . . .

Käferstein. [*Rattles a toy bank.*] Well, I deposit this offering, which is a fire-proof bank, next to the perambulator of this excellent offspring of the mason, with the wish that he will rise to be at least a royal architect.

John. [*Having put cordial glasses on the table, he fetches and opens a fresh bottle.*] Well, now I'm goin' to uncork the *Danziger Goldwasser.*

Hassenreuter. To him who hath shall be given, as you observe, Mrs. John.

John. [*Filling the glasses.*] Nobody ain't goin' to say that my child's unprovided for, gentlemen. But I takes it very kindly o' you, gentlemen! [*All except* Mrs. Hassenreuter *and* Walburga *lift up their glasses.*] To your health! Come on, mother, we'll drink together too.

[*The action follows the words.*]

Hassenreuter. [*In a tone of reproof.*] Mama, you must, of course, drink with us.

John. [*Having drunk, with jolly expansiveness.*] I ain't goin' to Hamburg no more now. The boss c'n send some other feller there. I been quarrelin' with him about that these three days. I gotta take up my hat right now an' go there; he axed me to come roun' to his office again at six. If he don' want to give in, he needn't. It won't never do for the father of a family to be forever an' a day away from his family . . . I got a friend—why, all I gotta do's to say the word 'n I c'n get work on the layin' o' the foundations o' the new houses o' Parliament. Twelve years I been workin' for this same boss! I c'n afford to make a change some time.

Hassenreuter. [*Pats John's shoulder.*] Quite of your opinion, quite! Our family life is something that neither money nor kind words can buy of us.

[Erich Spitta *enters. His hat is soiled; his clothes show traces of mud. His tie is gone. He looks pale and excited and is busy wiping his hands with his handkerchief.*]

Spitta. Beg pardon, but I wonder if I could brush up here a little, Mrs. John?

Hassenreuter. Ha, ha, ha! For heaven's sake, what have you been up to, my good Spitta?

Spitta. I only escorted a lady home, Mr. Hassenreuter—nothing else!

Hassenreuter. [*Who has joined in the general outburst of laughter called forth by* Spitta's *explanation.*] Well now, listen here! You blandly say: Nothing else! And you announce it publicly here before all these people?

Spitta. [*In consternation.*] Why not? The lady in question was very well dressed; I've often seen her on the stairs of this

house, and she unfortunately met with an accident on the street.

Hassenreuter. You don't say so? Tell us about it, dear Spitta! Apparently the lady inflicted spots on your clothes and scratches on your hands.

Spitta. Oh, no. That was probably the fault of the mob. The lady had an attack of some kind. The policeman caught hold of her so awkwardly that she slipped down in the middle of the street immediately in front of two omnibus horses. I simply couldn't bear to see that, although I admit that the function of the Good Samaritan is, as a rule, beneath the dignity of well-dressed people on the public streets.

[Mrs. John *wheels the perambulator behind the partition and reappears with a basin full of water; which she places on a chair.*]

Hassenreuter. Did the lady, by any chance, belong to that international high society which we either regulate or segregate?

Spitta. I confess that that was quite as indifferent to me in the given instance, as it was to one of the omnibus horses who held his left fore foot suspended in the air for five, six or, perhaps, even eight solid minutes, in order not to trample on the woman who lay immediately beneath it. [Spitta *is answered by a round of laughter.*] You may laugh! The behaviour of the horse didn't strike me as in the least ludicrous. I could well understand how some people applauded him, clapped their hands, and how others stormed a bakery to buy buns with which to feed him.

Mrs. John. [*Fanatically.*] I wish he'd trampled all he could! [Mrs. John's *remark calls forth another outburst of laughter.*] An' anyhow! That there Knobbe woman! She oughta be put in some public place, that she ought, publicly strapped to a bench an' then beaten—beaten—that's what! She oughta have the stick taken to her so the blood jus' spurts!

Spitta. Exactly. I've never been deluded into thinking that the so-called Middle Ages were quite over and done with. It isn't so long ago, in the year eighteen hundred and thirty-seven, as a matter of fact, that a widow named Mayer was publicly broken on the wheel right here in the city of Berlin on Hausvogtei Square.—[*He displays fragments of the lenses of his spectacles.*] By the way, I must hurry to the optician at once.

John. [*To* Spitta.] You must excuse us. But didn't you take that there fine lady home on this very floor acrost the way? Aha! Well, mother she noticed it right off that that couldn't ha' been nobody but that Knobbe woman what's known for sendin' girls o' twelve out on the streets! Then she stays away herself an' swills liquor an' has all kinds o' dealin's an' takes no care o' her own children. Then when she's been drunk an' wakes up she beats 'em with her fists an' with an umbrella.

Hassenreuter. [*Pulling himself together and bethinking himself.*] Hurry, gentlemen! We must proceed to our period of instruction. We're fifteen minutes behind hand as it is and our time is limited. We must close the period quite punctually to-day. I'm sorry. Come, mama. See you later, ladies and gentlemen.

[Hassenreuter *offers his arm to his wife and leaves the room, followed by* Käferstein *and* Dr. Kegel. John *also picks up his slouch hat.*]

John. [*To his wife.*] Good-bye. I gotta go an' see the boss. [*He also leaves.*]

Spitta. Could you possibly lend me a tie?

Mrs. John. I'll see what c'n be found in Paul's drawer. [*She opens the drawer of the table and turns pale.*] O Lord! [*She takes from the drawer a lock of child's hair held together by a riband.*] I found a bit of lock o' hair here that was cut off the head of our little Adelbert by his father when he was lyin' in the coffin. [*A profound, grief-stricken sadness suddenly comes over her face, which gives way again, quite as suddenly, to a gleam of triumph.*] An' now the crib is full again after all! [*With an expression of strange joyfulness, the lock of hair in her hand, she leads the young people to the door of the partition through which the perambulator projects into the main room by two-thirds of its length. Arrived there she holds the lock of hair close to the head of the living child.*] Come on! Come on here! [*With a strangely mysterious air she beckons to* Walburga *and* Spitta, *who take up their stand next to*

her and to the child.] Now look at that there hair an' at this! Ain't it the same? Wouldn't you say it was the same identical hair?

Spitta. Quite right. It's the same to the minutest shade, Mrs. John.

Mrs. John. All right! That's all right! That's what I wanted to know. [*Together with the child she disappears behind the partition.*]

Walburga. Doesn't it strike you, Erich, that Mrs. John's behaviour is rather peculiar?

Spitta. [*Taking* WALBURGA'S *hands and kissing them shyly but passionately.*] I don't know, I don't know . . . Or, at least, my opinion mustn't count to-day. The sombre state of my own mind colours all the world. Did you get the letter?

Walburga. Yes. But I couldn't make out why you hadn't been at our house in such a long while.

Spitta. Forgive me, Walburga, but I couldn't come.

Walburga. And why not?

Spitta. Because my mind was not at one with itself.

Walburga. You want to become an actor? Is that true? You're going to change professions?

Spitta. What I'll be in the end may be left to God. But never a parson—never a country parson!

Walburga. Listen! I've had my fortune told from the cards.

Spitta. That's nonsense, Walburga. You mustn't do that.

Walburga. I swear to you, Erich, that it isn't nonsense. The woman told me I was betrothed in secret and that my betrothed is an actor. Of course I laughed her to scorn. And immediately after that mama told me that you wanted to be an actor.

Spitta. Is that a fact?

Walburga. It's true—every bit of it. And in addition the clairvoyant said that we would have a visitor who would cause us much trouble.

Spitta. My father is coming to Berlin, Walburga, and it's undoubtedly true that the old gentleman will give us not a little trouble. Father doesn't know it, but my views and his have been worlds asunder for a long time. It didn't need these letters of his which seem actually to burn in my pocket and by which he answered my confession—it didn't need these letters to tell me that.

Walburga. An evil, envious, venomous star presided over our secret meeting here! Oh, how I used to admire my papa! And since that Sunday I blush for him every minute. And however much I try, I can't, since that day, look frankly and openly into his eyes.

Spitta. Did you have differences with your father too?

Walburga. Oh, if it were nothing more than that! I was so proud of papa! And now I tremble to think of even your finding it out. You'd despise us!

Spitta. I despise anyone? Dear child, I can't think of anything less fitting for me! Look here: I'll set you an example in the matter of frankness. A sister of mine, six years older than I, was governess in a noble family. Well, a misfortune happened to her and . . . when she sought refuge in the house of her parents, my Christian father put her out of doors! I believe he thought that Jesus would have done the same. And so my sister gradually sank lower and lower and some day we can go and visit her in the little suicides' graveyard near Schildhorn where she finally found rest.

Walburga. [*Puts her arms around* SPITTA.] Poor boy, you never told me a word of that.

Spitta. Circumstances have changed now and I speak of it. I shall speak of it to papa too even if it causes a breach between us.—You're always surprised when I get excited, and that I can't control myself when I see some poor devil being kicked about, or when I see the rabble mistreating some poor fallen girl. I have actual hallucinations sometimes. I seem to see ghosts in bright daylight and my own sister among them!

[PAULINE PIPERCARCKA *enters, dressed as before. Her little face seems to have grown paler and prettier.*]

Pauline. Good mornin'.

Mrs. John. [*From behind the partition.*] Who's that out there?

Pauline. Pauline, Mrs. John.

Mrs. John. Pauline? I don't know no Pauline.

Pauline. Pauline Pipercarcka, Mrs. John.

Mrs. John. Who? Oh, well then you c'n wait a minute, Pauline.

Walburga. Good-bye, Mrs. John.

Mrs. John. [*Emerges from behind the partition and carefully draws the hangings.*] That's right. I got somethin' to discuss with this here young person. So you young folks c'n see about getting out.

[Spitta *and* Walburga *leave hastily.* Mrs. John *locks the door behind them.*]

Mrs. John. So it's you, Pauline? An' what is it you want?

Pauline. What should I be wantin'? Somethin' jus' drove me here! Couldn't wait no longer. I has to see how everythin' goes.

Mrs. John. How what goes? What's everythin'?

Pauline. [*With a somewhat bad conscience.*] Well, if it's well; if it's gettin' on nicely.

Mrs. John. If what's well? If what's gettin' on nicely?

Pauline. You oughta know that without my tellin'.

Mrs. John. *What* ought I to know without your tellin' me?

Pauline. I wants to know if anythin's happened to the child!

Mrs. John. What child? An' what could ha' happened? Talk plainly, will you? There ain't a word o' your crazy chatter that anybody c'n understand!

Pauline. I ain't sayin' nothin' but what's true, Mrs. John.

Mrs. John. Well, what is it?

Pauline. My child . . .

Mrs. John. [*Gives her a terrific box on the ear.*] Say that again an' I'll bang my boots about your ears so that you'll think you're the mother o' triplets. An' now: get outa here! An' don' never dare to show your face here again!

Pauline. [*Starts to go. She shakes the door which is locked.*] She's beaten me! Help! Help! I don' has to stand that! No! [*Weeping.*] Open the door! She's maltreated me, Mrs. John has!

Mrs. John. [*Utterly transformed, embraces* Pauline, *thus restraining her.*] Pauline! For God's sake, Pauline! I don' know what could ha' gotten into me! You jus' be good now an' quiet down an' I'll beg your pardon. What d'you want me to do? I'll get down on my knees if you wants me to! Anythin'! Pauline! Listen! Let me do *some*thin'!

Pauline. Why d'you go 'n hit me in the face? I'm goin' to headquarters and say as how you slapped me in the face. I'm goin' to headquarters to give notice!

Mrs. John. [*Thrusts her face forward.*] Here! You c'n hit me back—right in the face! Then it's all right; then it's evened up.

Pauline. I'm goin' to headquarters . . .

Mrs. John. Yes, then it's evened up. You jus' listen to what I says: Don't you see it'll be evened up then all right! What d'you want to do? Come on now an' hit me!

Pauline. What's the good o' that when my cheek is swollen?

Mrs. John. [*Striking herself a blow on the cheek.*] There! Now my cheek is swollen too. Come on, my girl, hit me an' don' be scared!—An' then you c'n tell me everythin' you got on your heart. In the meantime I'll go an' I'll cook for you an' me, Miss Pauline, a good cup o' reel coffee made o' beans—none o' your chicory slop, so help me!

Pauline. [*Somewhat conciliated.*] Why did you has to go an' be so mean an' rough to a poor girl like me, Mrs. John?

Mrs. John. That's it—that's jus' what I'd like to know my own self! Come on, Pauline, an' sit down! So! It's all right, I tells you! Sit down! It's fine o' you to come an' see me! How many beatin's didn't I get from my poor mother because sometimes I jus' seemed to go crazy an' not be the same person no more. She said to me more'n onct: Lass, look out! You'll be doin' for yourself some day! An' maybe she was right; maybe it'll be that way. Well now, Pauline, tell me how you are an' how you're gettin' along?

Pauline. [*Laying down bank-notes and handfuls of silver, without counting them, on the table.*] Here is the money: I don't need it.

Mrs. John. I don' know nothin' about no money, Pauline.

Pauline. Oh, you'll know about the money all right! It's been jus' burnin' into me, that it has! It was like a snake under my pillow . . .

Mrs. John. Oh, come now . . .

Pauline. Like a snake that crept out when I went to sleep. An' it tormented me an' wound itself aroun' me an' squeezed me so that I screamed right out an' my landlady found me lyin' on the bare floor jus' like somebody what's dead.

Mrs. John. You jus' let that be right now, Pauline. Take a bit of a drink first of all! [*She pours out a small glassful of brandy.*] An' then come an' eat a bite. It was my husband's birthday yesterday. [*She gets out some coffee-cake of which she cuts an oblong piece.*]

Pauline. Oh, no, I don' feel like eatin'.

Mrs. John. That strengthens you; that does you good; you oughta eat that! But I is pleased to see, Pauline, how your fine constitootion helped you get back your strength so good.

Pauline. But now I want to have a look at it, Mrs. John.

Mrs. John. What's that? What d'you want to have a look at?

Pauline. If I could ha' walked I'd ha' been here long ago. I want to see now what I come to see!

[Mrs. John, *whose almost creeping courtesies have been uttered with lips aquiver with fear, pales ominously and keeps silent. She goes to the kitchen cabinet, wrenches the coffee handmill out and pours beans into it. She sits down, squeezes the mill between her knees, grasps the handle, and stares with a consuming expression of nameless hatred over at* Pauline.]

Mrs. John. Eh? Oh, yes! What d'you want to see? What d'you want to see now all of a sudden? That what you wanted to throttle with them two hands o' yours, eh?

Pauline. Me?

Mrs. John. D'you want to lie about it? *I'll* go and give notice about you!

Pauline. Now you've tormented me an' jabbed at me an' tortured me enough, Mrs. John. You followed me up; you wouldn' leave me no rest where I went. Till I brought my child into the world on a heap o' rags up in your loft. You gave me all kinds o' hopes an' you scared me with that rascal of a feller up there! You told my fortune for me outa the cards about my intended an' you baited me an' hounded me till I was most crazy.

Mrs. John. An' that's what you are. Yes, you're as crazy as you c'n be. I tormented you, eh? Is that what I did? I picked you up outa the gutter! I fetched you outa the midst of a blizzard when you was standin' by the chronometer an' stared at the lamplighter with eyes that was that desperate scared! You oughta seen yourself! An' I hounded you, eh? Yes, to prevent the police an' the police-waggon an' the devil hisself from catchin' you! I left you no rest, eh? I tortured you, did I? to keep you from jumpin' into the river with the child in your womb! [*Mocking her.*] "I'll throw myself into the canal, mother John! I'll choke the child to death! I'll kill the little crittur with my hat pin! I'll go an' run to where its father plays the zither, right in the midst o' the saloon, an' I'll throw the dead child at his feet!" That's what you said; that's the way you talked—all the blessed day long and sometimes half the night too till I put you to bed an' petted you an' stroked you till you went to sleep. An' you didn't wake up again till next day on the stroke o' twelve, when the bells was ringin' from all the churches. Yes, that's the way I scared you, an' then gave you hope again, an' didn't give you no peace! You forgot all that there, eh?

Pauline. But it's my child, Mrs. John . . .

Mrs. John. [*Screams.*] You go an' get your child outa the canal! [*She jumps up and walks hastily about the room, picking up and throwing aside one object after another.*]

Pauline. Ain't I goin' to be allowed to see my child even?

Mrs. John. Jump into the water an' get it there! Then you'll have it! I ain't keepin' you back. God knows!

Pauline. All right! You c'n slap me, you c'n beat me, you c'n throw things at my head if you wants to. Before I don' know where my child is an' before I ain't seen it with my own eyes, nothin' an' nobody ain't goin' to get me away from this place.

Mrs. John. [*Interrupting her.*] Pauline, I put it out to nurse!

Pauline. That's a lie! Don't I hear it

smackin' its lips right behind that there partition. [*The child behind the partition begins to cry.* PAULINE *hastens toward it. She exclaims with pathetic tearfulness, obviously forcing the note of motherhood a little.*] Don' you cry, my poor, poor little boy! Little mother's comin' to you now!

[MRS. JOHN, *almost beside herself, has sprung in front of the door, thus blocking* PAULINE'S *way.*]

Pauline. [*Whining helplessly but with clenched fists.*] Lemme go in an' see my child!

Mrs. John. [*A terrible change coming over her face.*] Look at me, girl! Come here an' look me in the eye!—D'you think you c'n play tricks on a woman that looks the way I do? [PAULINE *sits down still moaning.*] Sit down an' howl an' whine till . . . till your throat's swollen so you can't give a groan. But if you gets in here —then you'll be dead or I'll be dead an' the child—he won't be alive no more neither.

Pauline. [*Rises with some determination.*] Then look out for what'll happen.

Mrs. John. [*Attempting to pacify the girl once more.*] Pauline, this business was all settled between us. Why d'you want to go an' burden yourself with the child what's my child now an' is in the best hands possible? What d'you want to do with it? Why don't you go to your intended? You two'll have somethin' better to do than listen to a child cryin' an' takin' all the care an' trouble he needs!

Pauline. No, that ain't the way it is! He's gotta marry me now! They all says so—Mrs. Kielbacke, when I had to take treatment, she said so. They says I'm not to give in; he has to marry me. An' the registrar he advised me too. That's what he said an' he was mad, too, when I told him how I sneaked up into a loft to have my baby! He cried out loud that I wasn't to let up! Poor, maltreated crittur—that's what he called me an' he put his hand in his pocket an' gave me three crowns! All right. So we needn't quarrel no more, Mrs. John. I jus' come anyhow to tell you to be at home to-morrow afternoon at five o'clock. An' why? Because to-morrow an official examiner'll come to look after things here. I don't has to worry myself with you no more . . .

Mrs. John. [*Moveless and shocked beyond expression.*] What? You went an' give notice at the public registry?

Pauline. O' course? Does I want to go to gaol?

Mrs. John. An' what did you tell the registrar?

Pauline. Nothin' but that I give birth to a boy. An' I was so ashamed! Oh my God, I got red all over! I thought I'd just have to go through the floor.

Mrs. John. Is that so? Well, if you was so ashamed why did you go an' give notice?

Pauline. 'Cause my landlady an' Mrs. Kielbacke, too, what took me there, didn't give me no rest.

Mrs. John. H-m. So they knows it now at the public registry?

Pauline. Yes; they had to know, Mrs. John!

Mrs. John. Didn't I tell you over an' over again?

Pauline. You gotta give notice o' that! D'you want me to be put in gaol for a investergation?

Mrs. John. I told you as how I'd give notice.

Pauline. I axed the registrar right off. Nobody hadn't been there.

Mrs. John. An' what did you say exackly?

Pauline. That his name was to be Aloysius Theophil an' that he was boardin' with you.

Mrs. John. An' to-morrow an officer'll be comin' in.

Pauline. He's a gentleman from the guardian's office. What's the matter with that? Why don't you keep still an' act sensible. You scared me most to death a while ago!

Mrs. John. [*As if absent-minded.*] That's right. There ain't nothin' to be done about that now. An' there ain't so much to that, after all, maybe.

Pauline. All right. An' now c'n I see my child, Mrs. John?

Mrs. John. Not to-day. Wait till to-morrow, Pauline.

Pauline. Why not to-day?

Mrs. John. Because no good'd come of it this day. Wait till to-morrow, five o'clock in the afternoon.

Pauline. That's it. My landlady says it was written that way, that a gentlemen

from the city'll be here to-morrow afternoon five o'clock.

Mrs. John. [*Pushing* PAULINE *out and herself going out of the room with her, in the same detached tone.*] All right. Let him come, girl.

[MRS. JOHN *has gone out into the hall for a moment. She now returns without* PAULINE. *She seems strangely changed and absent-minded. She takes a few hasty steps toward the door of the partition; then stands still with an expression of fruitless brooding on her face. She interrupts herself in this brooding and runs to the window. Having reached it she turns and on her face there reappears the expression of dull detachment. Slowly, like a somnambulist, she walks up to the table and sits down beside it, leaning her chin on her hand.* SELMA KNOBBE *appears in the doorway.*]

Selma. Mother's asleep, Mrs. John, an' I'm that hungry. Might I have a bite o' bread?

[MRS. JOHN *rises mechanically and cuts a slice from the loaf of bread with the air of one under an hypnotic influence.*]

Selma. [*Observing* MRS. JOHN'S *state of mind.*] It's me! What's the matter, Mrs. John? Whatever you do, don't cut yourself with the bread knife.

Mrs. John. [*Lets the loaf and the bread-knife slip involuntarily from her hand to the table. A dry sobbing overwhelms her more and more.*] Fear!—Trouble!—You don't know nothin' about that! [*She trembles and grasps after some support.*]

ACT THREE

The same decoration as in the first act. The lamp is lit. The dim light of a hanging lamp illuminates the passage.

HASSENREUTER *is giving his three pupils,* SPITTA, DR. KEGEL *and* KÄFERSTEIN *instruction in the art of acting. He himself is seated at the table, uninterruptedly opening letters and beating time to the rhythm of the verses with a paper cutter. In front of him stand, facing each other,* KEGEL *and* KÄFERSTEIN *on one side,* SPITTA *on the other, thus representing the two choruses in Schiller's "Bride of Messina." The young men stand in the midst of a diagram drawn with chalk on the floor and separated, like a chess-board, into sixty-four rectangles. On the high stool in front of the office desk* WALBURGA *is sitting. Waiting in the background stands the house steward* QUAQUARO, *who might be the manager of a wandering circus and, in the capacity of athlete, its main attraction. His speech is uttered in a guttural tenor. He wears bedroom slippers. His breeches are held up by an embroidered belt. An open shirt, fairly clean, a light jacket, a cap now held in his hand, complete his attire.*

Dr. Kegel and Käferstein. [*Mouthing the verses sonorously and with exaggerated dignity.*]

"Thee salute I with reverence,
Lordliest chamber,
Thee, my high rulers'
Princeliest cradle,
Column-supported, magnificent roof.
Deep in its scabbard . . ."

Hassenreuter. [*Cries in a rage.*] Pause! Period! Period! Pause! Period! You're not turning the crank of a hurdy-gurdy! The chorus in the "Bride of Messina" is no hand-organ tune! "Thee salute I with reverence!" Start over again from the beginning, gentlemen! "Thee salute I with reverence, Lordliest chamber!" Something like that, gentlemen! "Deep in its scabbard let the sword rest." Period! "Magnificent roof." I meant to say: Period! But you may go on if you want to.

Dr. Kegel and Käferstein.

"Deep in its scabbard
Let the sword rest
Fettered fast by your gateway
Moveless may lie Strife's snaky-locked monster.
For . . ."

Hassenreuter. [*As before.*] Hold on! Don't you know the meaning of a full stop, gentlemen? Haven't you any knowledge of the elements? "Snaky-haired monster." Period! Imagine that a pile is driven there! You've got to stop, to pause. There must be silence like the silence of the dead! You've got to imagine yourself wiped out of existence for the moment,

Käferstein. And then—out with your best trumpeting chest-notes! Hold on! Don't lisp, for God's sake. "For . . ." Go on now! Start!

Dr. Kegel and Käferstein.

"For this hospitable house's
Inviolable threshold
Guardeth an oath, the Furies'
child . . ."

Hassenreuter. [*Jumps up, and runs about and roars.*] Oath, oath, oath, oath!!! Don't you know what an oath is, Käferstein? "Guardeth an oath!!—the Furies' child." This oath is said to be the child of the Furies, Dr. Kegel! You've got to use your voice! The audience, to the last usher, has got to be one vast quivering gooseflesh when you say that! One shiver must run through every bone in the house! Listen to me: "For this house's . . . threshold Guardeth an oath!!! The Furies' child, The fearfullest of the infernal deities!"—Go ahead! Don't repeat these verses. But you can stop long enough to observe that an oath and a Munich beer radish are, after all, two different things.

Spitta. [*Declaims.*]

"Ireful my heart in my bossom burneth . . ."

Hassenreuter. Hold on! [*He runs up to* Spitta *and pushes and nudges the latter's arms and legs in order to produce the desired tragic pose.*]—First of all, you lack the requisite statuesqueness of posture, my dear Spitta. The dignity of a tragic character is in nowise expressed in you. Then you did not, as I expressly desired you to do, advance your right foot from the field marked ID into that marked IIC! Finally, Mr. Quaquaro is waiting; so let us interrupt ourselves for a moment. So; now I'm at your service, Mr. Quaquaro. That is to say, I asked you to come up because, in making my inventory, it became clear that several cases and boxes cannot be found or, in other words, have been stolen. Now, before lodging information with the authorities which, of course, I am determined to do, I wanted first to get your advice. I wanted to do that all the more because, in place of the lost cases, there was found, in a corner of the attic, a very peculiar mess—a find that could appropriately be sent to Dr. Virchow. First there was a blue feather-duster, truly prehistoric, and an inexpressible vessel, the use of which, quite harmless in itself, is equally inexpressible.

Quaquaro. Well, sir, I can climb up there if you want me to.

Hassenreuter. Suppose you do that. Up there you'll meet Mrs. John, whom the find in question has disquieted even more than it has me. These three gentlemen, who are my pupils, won't be persuaded that something very like a murder didn't take place up there. But, if you please, let's not cause a scandal!

Käferstein. When something got lost in my mother's shop in Schneidemühl, it was always said that the rats had eaten it. And really, when you consider the number of rats and mice in this house—I very nearly stepped on one on the stairs a while ago—why shouldn't we suppose that the cases of costumes were devoured in the same way. Silk is said to be sweet.

Hassenreuter. Very excellent! Very good! You're relieved from the necessity of indulging in any more notion-shopkeepers' fancies, my good Käferstein! Ha, ha, ha! It only remains for you to dish up for us the story of the cavalry man Sorgenfrei, who, according to your assertion, when this house was still a cavalry barracks, hanged himself—spurred and armed—in my loft. And then the last straw would be for you to direct our suspicions toward him.

Käferstein. You can still see the very nail he used.

Quaquaro. There ain't a soul in the house what don't know the story of the soldier Sorgenfrei who put an end to hisself with a rope somewhere under the rooftree.

Käferstein. The carpenter's wife downstairs and a seamstress in the second story have repeatedly seen him by broad daylight nodding out of the attic window and bowing down with military demeanour.

Quaquaro. A corporal, they says, called the soldier Sorgenfrei a windbag an' gave him a blow outa spite. An' the idjit took that to heart.

Hassenreuter. Ha, ha, ha! Military brutalities and ghost stories! That mixture is original, but hardly to our purpose. I assume that the theft, or whatever it was, took place during those eleven or twelve days that I spent on business in Alsace.

So look the matter over and have the goodness, later, to report to me.

[HASSENREUTER *turns to his pupils.* QUAQUARO *mounts the stars to the loft and disappears behind the trap-door.*]

Hassenreuter. All right, my good Spitta: Fire away!

[SPITTA *recites simply according to the sense and without any tragic bombast.*]

"Ireful my heart in my bosom burneth,
My hand is ready for sword or lance,
For unto me the Gorgon turneth
My foeman's hateful countenance.
Scarce I master the rage that assails me.
Shall I salute him with fair speech?
Better, perchance, my ire avails me?
Only the Fury me affrighteth,
Protectress of all within her reach,
And God's truce which all foes uniteth."

Hassenreuter. [*Who has sat down, supports his head on his hand and listens resignedly. Not until* SPITTA *has ceased speaking for some moments does he look up, as if coming to himself.*] Are you quite through, Spitta? If so, I'm much obliged! —You see, my dear fellow, I've really gotten into a deuce of a situation as far as you are concerned: either I tell you impudently to your face that I consider your method of elocution excellent—and in that case I'd be guilty of a lie of the most contemptible kind; or else I tell you that I consider it abominable and then we'd get into another beastly row.

Spitta. [*Turning pale.*] Yes, all this stilted, rhetorical stuff is quite foreign to my nature. That's the very reason why I abandoned theology. The preacher's tone is repulsive to me.

Hassenreuter. And so you would like to reel off these tragic choruses as a clerk of court mumbles a document or a waiter a bill of fare?

Spitta. I don't care for the whole sonorous bombast of the "Bride of Messina."

Hassenreuter. I wish you'd repeat that charming opinion.

Spitta. There's nothing to be done about it, sir. Our conceptions of dramatic art diverge utterly, in some respects.

Hassenreuter. Man alive, at this particular moment your face is a veritable monogram of megalomania and impudence! I beg your pardon, but you're my pupil now and no longer the tutor of my children. Your views and mine! You ridiculous tyro! You and Schiller! Friedrich Schiller! I've told you a hundred times that your puerile little views of art are nothing but an innate striving toward imbecility!

Spitta. You would have to prove that to me, after all.

Hassenreuter. You prove it yourself every time you open your mouth! You deny the whole art of elocution, the value of the voice in acting! You want to substitute for both the art of toneless squeaking! Further you deny the importance of action in the drama and assert it to be a worthless accident, a sop for the groundlings! You deny the validity of poetic justice, of guilt and its necessary expiation. You call all that a vulgar invention—an assertion by means of which the whole moral order of the world is abrogated by the learned and crooked understanding of your single magnificent self! Of the heights of humanity you know nothing! You asserted the other day that, in certain circumstances, a barber or a scrubwoman might as fittingly be the protagonist of a tragedy as Lady Macbeth or King Lear!

Spitta. [*Still pale, polishing his spectacles.*] Before art as before the law all men are equal, sir.

Hassenreuter. Aha? Is that so? Where did you pick up that banality?

Spitta. [*Without permitting himself to be disconcerted.*] The truth of that saying has become my second nature. In believing it I probably find myself at variance with Schiller and Gustav Freytag, but not at all with Lessing and Diderot. I have spent the past two semesters in the study of these two great dramaturgic critics, and the whole stilted French psuedo-classicism is, as far as I'm concerned, utterly destroyed —not only in creative art itself but in such manifestations as the boundless folly of the directions for acting which Goethe prescribed in his old age. These are mere superannuated nonsense.

Hassenreuter. You don't mean it?

Spitta. And if the German stage is ever to recuperate it must go back to the young Schiller, the young Goethe—the author of "Götz"—and ever again to Gotthold Ephraim Lessing! There you will find set down principles of dramatic art which are

adapted to the rich complexity of life in all its fullness, and which are potent to cope with Nature itself!

Hassenreuter. Walburga! I'm afraid Mr. Spitta is taking us for each other. Mr. Spitta, you're about to give a lesson! Walburga, you and your teacher are free to retire to the library.—If human arrogance and especially that of very young people could be crystallised into one formation—humanity would be buried under that rock like an ant under the granite masses of an antediluvian mountain range!

Spitta. But I wouldn't in any wise be refuted thereby.

Hassenreuter. Man, I tell you that I've not only passed through two semesters of formal study, but I have grown grey in the practice of the actor's art! And I tell you that Goethe's catechism for actors is the alpha and the omega of my artistic convictions! If you don't like that—get another teacher!

Spitta. [*Pursuing his argument calmly.*] According to my opinion, Goethe with his senile regulations for actors denied, in the pettiest way, himself and his whole original nature. What is one to say of his ruling that every actor, irrespective of the quality of the character represented by him, must—these are his very words—show an ogre-like expression of countenance in order that the spectator be at once reminded of the nature of lofty tragedy. Actually, these are his very words!

[Käferstein *and* Kegel *make an effort to assume ogre-like expressions.*]

Hassenreuter. Get out your note-book, most excellent Spitta, and record your opinion, please, that Manager Hassenreuter is an ass, that Schiller is an ass, Goethe an ass, Aristotle, too, of course—[*he begins suddenly to laugh like mad*]—and ha, ha, ha! a certain Spitta a—night watchman!

Spitta. I'm glad to see, sir, that, at least, you've recovered your good humour.

Hassenreuter. The devil! I haven't recovered it at all! You're a symptom. So you needn't think yourself very important. —You are a rat, so to speak. One of those rats who are beginning, in the field of politics, to undermine our glorious and recently united German Empire! They are trying to cheat us of the reward of our labours! And in the garden of German art these rats are gnawing at the roots of the tree of idealism. They are determined to drag its crown into the mire!—Down, down, down into the dust with you!

[Käferstein *and* Kegel *try to preserve their gravity but soon break out into loud laughter, which* Hassenreuter *is impelled to join.* Walburga *looks on in wide-eyed astonishment.* Spitta *remains serious.* Mrs. John *is now seen descending the stairs of the loft. After a little while* Quaquaro *follows her.*]

Hassenreuter. [*Perceives* Mrs. John *and points her out to* Spitta *with violent gesticulations as if he had just made an important discovery.*] There comes your tragic Muse!

Mrs. John. [*Approaches, abashed by the laughter of* Hassenreuter, Kegel *and* Käferstein.] Why, what d'you see about me?

Hassenreuter. Nothing but what is good and beautiful, Mrs. John! You may thank God that your quiet, withdrawn and peaceful life unfits you for the part of a tragic heroine.—But tell me, have you, by any chance, had an interview with ghosts?

Mrs. John. [*Unnaturally pale.*] Why do you ax that?

Hassenreuter. Perhaps you even saw the famous soldier Sorgenfrei who closed his career above as a deserter into a better world?

Mrs. John. If it was a livin' soul, maybe you might be right. But I ain't scared o' no dead ghosts.

Hassenreuter. Well, Mr. Quaquaro, how did it look under the roof there?

Quaquaro. [*Who has brought down with him a Swedish riding-boot.*] Well, I took a pretty good look aroun' an' I came to the conclusion that, at least, some shelterless ragamuffins has passed the night there; though how they got in I ain't sayin'. An' then I found this here boot.—[*Out of the boot he draws an infant's bottle, topped by a rubber nipple and half filled with milk.*]

Mrs. John. That's easily explained. I was up there settin' things to rights an' I had little Adelbert along with me. But I don' know nothin' about the rest.

Hassenreuter. Nobody has undertaken to assert that you do, Mrs. John.

Mrs. John. When you considers how my little Adelbert came into the world . . . an' when you considers how he died . . . nobody c'n come an' tell me nothin' about bein' a reel mother . . . But I gotta leave now, sir . . . I can't be comin' up here for two three days. Good-bye! I has to go to my sister-in-law an' let Adelbert enjoy the country air a little. [*She trots off through the door to the outer hall.*]

Hassenreuter. Can you make anything of her wild talk?

Quaquaro. There's been a screw loose there ever since her first baby came an' all the more after it took an' died. Now since she's got the second one, there's two screws what's wobbly. Howsoever, she c'n count—that's a fac'. She's got a good bit o' money loaned out at interest on pawned goods.

Hassenreuter. Well, but what is the injured party—namely, myself—to do?

Quaquaro. That depends on where the suspicion falls.

Hassenreuter. In this house?—You'll admit yourself, Mr. Quaquaro . . .

Quaquaro. That's true all right. But it won't be long before we'll have a little cleanin' up aroun' here! The widow Knobbe with all her crowd is goin' to be put out! An' then there's a gang in wing B., where there's some tough customers by what Policeman Schierke tells me. Well, they're goin' to come from headquarters pretty soon and blow up that crowd.

Hassenreuter. There must be a glee club somewhere in the house. At least I hear excellent male voices singing from time to time things like "Germany, our highest glory," and "Who has built thee, noble wood," and "In a cool valley turneth."

Quaquaro. Them's the very fellers! That's right! An' they do sing fine! The sayin' is that bad men has no songs, but I wouldn't advise no one to fool with *them!* I wouldn't go into that company my own self without Prince. That's my bull dog. You just go an' lay information against 'em an' you won't be doin' no harm, sir. [*Exit.*]

Hassenreuter. [*Referring to* QUAQUARO.] The gleam in his eye demands security. His lips demand cash. His fist portends immediate warning. He's a lucky creature who doesn't dream of him at the end of the month. And whoever dreams of him roars for help. A horrible, greasy fellow. But without him the people who rent this old shell would get no money and the army-treasurer could strike the income of these rentals from his books.—[*The door bell rings.*]—That is Miss Alice Rütterbusch, the young soubrette with whom, unfortunately, I haven't been able to make a hard and fast contract yet on account of the way the aldermen of Strassburg shilly shally about their final decision. After my appointment, which I will secure by God's help, her engagement will be my first managerial act.—Walburga and Spitta, march up into the loft! Count the contents of the six boxes marked "Journalists" in order that we may complete our inventory at the proper time.—[*To* KÄFERSTEIN *and* DR. KEGEL.] You may withdraw into the library in the meantime . . . [*He steps forward in order to open the door.*]

[WALBURGA *and* SPITTA *disappear swiftly and very willingly into the loft;* KÄFERSTEIN *and* KEGEL *retire into the library.*]

Hassenreuter. [*In the background.*] If you please, step right in, my dear lady! I *beg* your pardon, sir! I was expecting a lady . . . I was expecting a young lady . . . But, please, come in.

[HASSENREUTER *comes forward accompanied by* PASTOR SPITTA. *The latter is sixty years old. A village parson, somewhat countrified. One might equally well take him to be a surveyor or a landowner in a small way. He is of vigorous appearance—short-necked, well-nourished, with a squat, broad face like Luther's. He wears a slouch-hat, spectacles and carries a cane and a coat of waterproof cloth over his arm. His clumsy boots and the state of his other garments show that they have long been accustomed to wind and weather.*]

Pastor Spitta. Do you know who I am, Mr. Hassenreuter?

Hassenreuter. Not quite exactly, but I would hazard . . .

Pastor Spitta. You may, you may! You needn't hesitate to call me Pastor Spitta from Schwoiz in Uckermark, whose son Erich—yes, that's it—has been employed in your family as private tutor or some-

thing like that. Erich Spitta: that's my son. And I'm obliged to say that with deep sorrow.

Hassenreuter. First of all, I'm very glad to have the privilege of your acquaintance. I hasten at once to beg you, however, dear Pastor, not to be too much worried, not to be too sorrowful concerning the little escapade in which your son is indulging.

Pastor Spitta. Oh, but I am greatly troubled. I am deeply grieved. [*Sitting down on a chair he surveys the strange place in which he finds himself with considerable interest.*] It is hard to say; it is extremely difficult to communicate to any one the real depth of anxiety. But forgive me a question, sir: I was in the trophy-chamber.—[*He touches one of the armored dummies with his cane.*] What kind of armor is this?

Hassenreuter. These figures are to represent the cuirassiers in Schiller's "Wallenstein."

Pastor Spitta. Ah, ah, my idea of Schiller was so very different! [*Collecting himself.*] Oh, this city of Berlin! It confuses me utterly. You see a man before you, sir, who is not only grieved, whom this Sodom of a city has not only stirred to his very depths, but who is actually broken-hearted by the deed of his son.

Hassenreuter. A deed? What deed?

Pastor Spitta. Is there any need to ask? The son of an honest man desiring to become an . . . an . . . an actor!

Hassenreuter. [*Drawing himself up. With the utmost dignity.*] My dear sir, I do not approve of your son's determination. But I am myself—*honi soit qui mal y pense*—the son of an honest man and myself, I trust, a man of honour. And I, whom you see before you, have been an actor, too. No longer than six weeks ago I took part in the Luther celebration—for I am no less an apostle of culture in the broadest sense—not only as manager but by ascending the boards on which the world is shadowed forth as an actor! From my point of view, therefore, your son's determination is scarcely open to objection on the score of his social standing or his honourable character. But it is a difficult calling and demands, above all, a high degree of talent. I am also willing to admit that it is a calling not without peculiar dangers to weak characters. And finally I have myself proved the unspeakable hardships of my profession so thoroughly that I would like to guard anyone else from entering it. That is the reason why I box my daughters' ears if the slightest notion of going on the stage seizes them, and why I would rather tie stones about their necks and drown them where the sea is deepest than see them marry actors.

Pastor Spitta. I didn't mean to wound any one's feelings. I admit, too, that a simple country parson like myself can't very well have much of a conception of such things. But consider a father now—just such a poor country parson—who has saved and hoarded his pennies in order that his son might have a career at the university. Now consider, further, that this son is just about to take his final examinations and that his father and his mother—I have a sick wife at home—are looking forward with anxiety and with longing, whichever you call it, toward the moment in which their son will mount the pulpit and deliver the trial sermon before the congregation of his choice. And then comes this letter. Why, the boy is mad!

[*The emotion of the* PASTOR *is not exactly consciously directed; it is controlled. The trembling of the hand with which he searches for the letter in his inner pocket and hands it to the manager is not quite convincing.*]

Hassenreuter. Young men search after various aims. We musn't be too much taken by surprise if, once in a while, a crisis of this kind is not to be avoided in a young man's life.

Pastor Spitta. Well, this crisis *was* avoidable. It will not be difficult for you to see from this letter who is responsible for this destructive change in the soul of a young, an excellent, and hitherto thoroughly obedient youth. I should never have sent him to Berlin. Yes, it is this so-called scientific theology, this theology that flirts with all the pagan philosophers, that would change the Lord our God into empty smoke and sublimate our blessed Saviour into thin air—it is this that I hold responsible for the grievous mistake of my child. And to this may be added other temptations. I tell you, sir, I have seen things which it is im-

possible for me to speak of! I have circulars in every pocket—"Ball of the Élite! Smart waitresses!" and so on! I was quietly walking, at half past twelve one night, through the arcade that connects Friedrich street with the Linden, and a disgusting fellow sidles up to me, wretched, undergrown, and asks me with a kind of greasy, shifty impudence: Doesn't the gentleman want something real fetching? And these show windows in which, right by the pictures of noble and exalted personages, naked actresses, dancers, in short the most shocking nudities are displayed! And finally this Corso—oh, this Corso! Where painted and bedizened vice jostles respectable women from the sidewalk! It's simply the end of the world!

Hassenreuter. Ah, my dear Pastor, the world doesn't so easily come to an end—nor, surely, will it do so on account of the nudities that offend or of the vice which slinks through the streets at night. The world will probably outlive me and the whole scurrilous interlude of humanity.

Pastor Spitta. What turns these young people aside from the right path is evil example and easy opportunity.

Hassenreuter. I beg your pardon, Pastor, but I have not observed in your son the slightest inclination toward leading a frivolous life. He is simply attracted to literature, and he isn't the first clergyman's son—remember merely Lessing and Herder—who has taken the road of literary study and creative art. Very likely he has manuscript plays in his desk even now. To be sure, I am bound to admit that the opinions which your son defends in the field of literature frighten even me at times!

Pastor Spitta. But that's horrible! That's frightful! That far exceeds my worst fears! And so my eyes have been opened.—My dear sir, I have had eight children, of whom Erich seemed our fairest hope and his next-oldest sister our heaviest trial. And now, it seems, the same accursed city has demanded them both as its victims. The girl developed prematurely, she was beautiful . . . and . . . But I must mention another circumstance now. I have been in Berlin for three days and I haven't seen Erich yet. When I tried to see him to-day, he was not at home in his rooms. I waited for a while and naturally looked about me in my son's dwelling. And now: look at this picture, sir! [*Replacing* Erich's *letter in his pocket he extracts therefrom a small photograph and holds it immediately under* Hassenreuter's *eyes.*]

Hassenreuter. [*Takes the picture and holds it at varying distances from him. He is disconcerted.*] Why should I look at this?

Pastor Spitta. The silly little face is of no importance. But pray look at the inscription.

Hassenreuter. Where?

Pastor Spitta. [*Reads.*] "From Walburga to her only sweetheart."

Hassenreuter. Permit me!—What's the meaning of this?

Pastor Spitta. It simply means some seamstress if not, what is worse, some shady waitress!

Hassenreuter. H-m. [*He slips the picture into his pocket.*] I shall keep this photograph.

Pastor Spitta. It is in such filth that my son wallows. And consider the situation in which it puts me: with what feelings, with what front shall I henceforward face my congregation from the pulpit . . . ?

Hassenreuter. Confound it, what business is that of mine? What have I to do with your offspring, with your lost sons and daughters? [*He pulls out the photograph again.*] And furthermore, as far as this excellent and sound-hearted young lady is concerned, you're quite mistaken in your ideas about waitresses and such like. I'll say nothing more. All other matters will adjust themselves. Good-bye.

Pastor Spitta. I confess frankly, I don't understand you. Probably this tone is the usual one in your circles. I will go and not annoy you any longer. But as a father I have the right, before God, to demand of you that henceforth you refuse to my deluded son this so-called dramatic instruction. I hope I shall not have to look for further ways and means of enforcing this demand.

Hassenreuter. I won't only do that, but I'll actually put him out of doors. [*He accompanies the* Pastor *to the door, slams it behind him and returns alone.*]

Hassenreuter. [*Waving his arms through the air.*] All that one can say here is: Plain parson! [*He rushes halfway up the*

stairs to the loft.] Spitta! Walburga! Come down here, will you?

[WALBURGA *and* SPITTA *come down.*]

Hassenreuter. [*To* WALBURGA, *who looks at him questioningly.*] Go to your high stool over there and sit down on the humorous part of your anatomy! Well, and you, my dear Spitta, what do you want?

Spitta. You called us both, sir.

Hassenreuter. Exactly. Now look me in the eye!

Spitta. Certainly.

[*He looks straight at* HASSENREUTER.]

Hassenreuter. You two want to make an ass of me. But you won't succeed! Silence! Not a word! I would have expected something very different from you! This is a striking proof of ingratitude. Keep still! Furthermore, a gentleman was here just now! That gentleman is afraid in Berlin! March! Follow him! Take him down into the street and try to make it clear to him that I'm neither your bootblack nor his.

[SPITTA *shrugs his shoulders, takes his hat and goes.*]

Hassenreuter. [*Strides up to* WALBURGA *energetically and tweaks her ear.*] And as for you, my dear, you'll have your ears soundly boxed if ever again without my permission you exchange two words with this rascal of a theologian gone to smash!

Walburga. Ouch, papa, ouch!

Hassenreuter. This fellow who is fond of making such an innocent face as if he couldn't harm a fly and whom I was careless enough to admit to my house is, unfortunately, a man behind whose mask the most shameless impudence lies in wait. I and my house are in the service of true propriety. Do you want to besmirch the escutcheon of our honour as the sister of this fellow seems to have done—a girl who disgraced her parents by coming to an end in the street and the gutter?

Walburga. I don't share your opinion about Erich, papa.

Hassenreuter. What's that? Well, at least you know my opinion. Either you give him his walking papers or else you can look out for yourself and find out what it is to get along, away from your parental roof, in a way of life regardless of honour, duty and decency! In that case you can go! I have no use for daughters of that kind!

Walburga. [*Pale and sombre.*] You are always saying, papa, that you too had to make your way independently and without your parents.

Hassenreuter. You're not a man.

Walburga. Certainly not. But think, for instance, of Alice Rütterbusch.

[*Father and daughter look firmly into each other's eyes.*]

Hassenreuter. Why should I? Have you a fever, eh? Or have you gone mad? [*He drops the whole discussion, noticeably put out of countenance, and taps at the library door.*] Where did we leave off? Begin at the proper place.

[KEGEL *and* KÄFERSTEIN *appear.*]

Kegel and Käferstein. [*Declaim.*]

"A wiser temper
Beseemeth age.
I, being reasonable,
Salute him first."

[*Led and directed by* SPITTA *appear* PAULINE PIPERCARCKA *in street dress and* MRS. KIELBACKE, *who carries an infant on a pillow.*]

Hassenreuter. What do you want here? What kind of women are you bringing here to annoy me?

Spitta. It isn't my fault, sir. The women insisted on coming to you.

Mrs. Kielbacke. No; all we wants is to see Mrs. John.

Pauline. An' Mrs. John she's always up here with you!

Hassenreuter. True. But I'm beginning to regret the fact, and I must insist, at all events, that she hold her private receptions in her own rooms and not here. Otherwise I'll soon equip the door here with patent locks and mantraps.—What's the matter with you, my good Spitta? I suppose you'll have to have the goodness to show these ladies the place they really want to go to.

Pauline. But Mrs. John ain't to be found in her rooms downstairs.

Hassenreuter. Well, she's not to be found up here either.

Mrs. Kielbacke. The reason is because this here young lady has her little son boardin' with Mrs. John.

Hassenreuter. Glad to hear it! Please

march now without further delay! Save me, Käferstein!

Mrs. Kielbacke. An' now a gentleman's come from the city, from the office of the government guardian office to see how the child is an' if it's well taken care of an' in good condition. An' then he went into Mrs. John's room an' we went with him. An' there was the child an' a note pinned to it what said that Mrs. John was workin' for you up here.

Hassenreuter. Where was the child boarding?

Mrs. Kielbacke. With Mrs. John.

Hassenreuter. [*Impatiently.*] That's simply a piece of imbecility. You are quite wrong.—Spitta, you would have been much better employed accompanying the old gentleman after whom I sent you than aiding these ladies to come here.

Spitta. I looked for the gentleman you speak of but he was already gone.

Hassenreuter. These ladies don't seem to believe me. Will you kindly inform them, gentlemen, that Mrs. John has no child in board, and that they are quite obviously mistaken in the name.

Käfterstein. I am asked to tell you that you are probably mistaken in the name.

Pauline. [*Vehemently and tearfully.*] She has got my baby! She had my baby boardin' with her. An' the gentleman came from the city an' he said that the child wasn't in no good hands an' that it was neglected. She went an' ruined my baby's health.

Hassenreuter. There is no doubt but what you have mistaken the name of the woman of whom you speak. Mrs. John has no child in board.

Pauline. She had my baby in her claws, that's what! An' she let it starve an' get sick! I gotta see her! I gotta tell her right out! She's gotta make my little baby well again! I gotta go to court. The gentleman says as how I gotta go to court an' give notice.

Hassenreuter. I beg of you not to get excited. The fact is that you are mistaken! How did you ever hit on the idea that Mrs. John has a child in board?

Pauline. Because I gave it to her myself.

Hassenreuter. But Mrs. John has her own child and it just occurs to me that she has taken it along with her on a visit to her sister-in-law.

Pauline. She ain't got no child. No, Mrs. John ain't got none! She cheats an' she lies. She ain't got none. She took my little Alois an' she ruined him.

Hassenreuter. By heaven, ladies, you are mistaken!

Pauline. Nobody won't believe me that I had a baby. My intended he wrote me a letter an' he says it ain't true an' that I'm a liar an' a low creature. [*She touches the pillow on which the infant is resting.*] It's mine an' I'll prove it in court! I c'n swear it by the holy Mother o' God.

Hassenreuter. Do uncover the child. [*It is done and* HASSENREUTER *observes the infant attentively.*]—H'm, the matter will not remain long in obscurity. In the first place . . . I know Mrs. John. If she had had this child in board it could never look as it does. And that is true quite simply because, where it is a question of children, Mrs. John has her heart in the right place.

Pauline. I want to see Mrs. John. That's all I says. I don't has to tell my business to everybody in the world. I c'n tell everythin' in court, down to the least thing—the day an' the hour an' jus' exackly the place where it was born! People is goin' to open their eyes; you c'n believe me.

Hassenreuter. What you assert, then, if I understand you rightly, is that Mrs. John has no baby of her own at all, and that the one which passes as such is in reality yours.

Pauline. God strike me dead if that ain't the truth!

Hassenreuter. And this is the child in question? I trust that God won't take you at your word this time.—You must know that I, who stand before you, am manager Hassenreuter and I have personally had in my own hands the child of Mrs. John, my charwoman, on three or four occasions. I even weighed it on the scales and found it to weigh over eight pounds. This poor little creature doesn't weigh over four pounds. And on the basis of this fact I can assure you that this child is not, at least, the child of Mrs. John. You may be right in asserting that it is yours. I am in no position to throw doubt on that. But I know Mrs. John's child and I am quite sure that it is, in no wise, identical with this.

Mrs. Kielbacke. [*Respectfully.*] No, no, that's right enough. It ain't identical.

Pauline. This baby here is identical enough all right, even if it's a bit underfed an' weakly. This business with the child is all straight enough! I'll take an oath that it's identical all right.

Hassenreuter. I am simply speechless. [*To his pupils.*] Our lesson is ruled by an evil star to-day, my dear boys. I don't know why, but the error which these ladies are making engrosses me. [*To the women.*] You may have entered the wrong door.

Mrs. Kielbacke. No, me an' the gentleman from the guardian's office an' the young lady went an' fetched this here child outa the room what has the name plate o' Mrs. John on it, an' took it out into the hall. Mrs. John wasn't there an' her husband the mason is absent in Hamburg.

[Policeman Schierke *comes in, fat and good-natured.*]

Hassenreuter. Ah, there's Mr. Schierke! What do you want here?

Schierke. I understand, sir, that two women fled up here to you.

Mrs. Kielbacke. We ain't fled at all.

Hassenreuter. They were inquiring for Mrs. John.

Schierke. May I be permitted to ax somethin' too?

Hassenreuter. If you please.

Pauline. Jus' let him ax. We don't has to worry.

Schierke. [*To* Mrs. Kielbacke.] What's your name?

Mrs. Kielbacke. I'm Mrs. Kielbacke.

Schierke. You're connected with the society for raisin' children, eh? Where do you live?

Mrs. Kielbacke. Linien street number nine.

Schierke. Is that your child that you have there?

Mrs. Kielbacke. That's Miss Pipercarcka her child.

Schierke. [*To* Pauline.] An' your name?

Pauline. Paula Pipercarcka from Skorzenin.

Schierke. This woman asserts that the child is yours. Do you assert that too?

Pauline. Sergeant, I has to ax for your protection because suspicions is cast on me an' I'm innercent. The gentleman from the city did come to me. An' I did get my child outa the room o' Mrs. John what I had it in board with . . .

Schierke. [*With a searching look.*] Yes? Maybe it was the door across the way where the restaurant keeper's widow Knobbe lives. Nobody knows what you're up to with that child nor who sent you an' bribed you. You ain't got a good conscience! You took the child an' slipped up here with it while its rightful mother, the widow Knobbe, what it's been stolen from, is huntin' all over the stairs an' halls for it an' while a detective is standin' acrost the way.

Pauline. I don't care about no detective. I'm . . .

Hassenreuter. You are refuted, my good girl. Can't you comprehend that? First you say that Mrs. John has no child. Next you say—kindly attend to me—that you had taken your child, which has been passing for Mrs. John's, out of the latter's room. However: all of us here happen to know Mrs. John's child and the one you have here is another. Is that clear to you? Hence your assertion cannot, in any circumstances, be a correct one!—And now, Schierke, you would do me a favor if you would conduct these ladies out so that I can continue giving my lesson.

Schierke. All right, but if I does that we'll get into that Knobbe crowd. Because her child has been stolen.

Pauline. It ain't me that done it; it's Mrs. John.

Schierke. That's all right. [*Continuing his account to* Hassenreuter.] And they says that the child has blue blood in it on its father's side. So Mrs. Knobbe thinks as how it's a plot of enemies 'cause they grudges her the alimony in some quarters an' a gentleman's eddication for the kid. [*Someone is beating at the door with fists.*] That's the Knobbe woman. There she comes now!

Hassenreuter. Mr. Schierke, you are responsible to me. If these people trespass on my premises and I suffer any damages thereby, I'll complain to the chief of police. I know Mr. Maddei very well. Don't be afraid, my dear boys. You are my witnesses.

Schierke. [*At the door.*] You stay out there! You don't get in here!

[*A small mob howls outside of the door.*]

Pauline. They c'n holler all they wants to but they can't get my child.

Hassenreuter. Perhaps this is the better way. You go into the library for the present. [*He escorts* PAULINE, MRS. KIELBACKE *and the child into the library.*] And now, Mr. Schierke, we might risk letting that fury enter in here.

Schierke. [*Opening the door slightly.*] All right. But only Mrs. Knobbe! Come in here a minute.

[MRS. SIDONIE KNOBBE *appears. She is tall and emaciated and dressed in a badly worn but fashionable summer gown. Her face bears the stigma of a dissolute life but gives evidence of a not ungentle origin. Her air is curiously like that of a gentlewoman. She talks affectedly and her eyes show addiction to alcohol and morphine.*]

Mrs. Knobbe. [*Sailing in.*] There is no cause for any anxiety, Mr. Hassenreuter. Those without are principally little boys and girls who have come with me because I am fond of children. Pray pardon me if I intrude. One of the children told me that two women had sneaked up here with my little boy. I am looking for my little son, named Helfgott Gundofried, who has actually disappeared from my dwelling. At the same time I do not wish to incommode you.

Schierke. An' you better not do that if I has any say about it.

Mrs. Knobbe. [*Disregarding these words except by a proud toss of the head.*] To my great regret I caused a certain amount of disturbance in the yard. From the yard as a place of vantage it is possible to command every window and I made inquires of the poor cigar maker in the second story and of the consumptive little seamstress in the third as to whether my Selma and my little son were with either of them. But nothing is farther from my intention than to create a scandal. I want you to know—for I am quite conscious of being in the presence of a distinguished, indeed, of a famous man—you are to know that where Helfgott Gundofried is concerned I am obliged to be strictly on my guard! [*With quivering voice and an occasional application of her handkerchief to her eyes.*] I am an unfortunate woman who is pursued by fate, who has sunk low but who has seen better days. I do not care to bore you with my troubles. But I am being pursued and there are those who would rob me of my last hope.

Schierke. Aw, hurry up an' say what you has to!

Mrs. Knobbe. [*As before.*] It is not enough that I was forced to lay aside my honest name. Later I lived in Paris and then married a brutal person, a south German inn-keeper, because I had the foolish thought that my affairs might be bettered thereby. O these scoundrels of men!

Schierke. This don't lead to nothin'! You cut it short, I tell you.

Mrs. Knobbe. But I am glad of the opportunity of standing, once more, face to face with a man of culture and intellect. I could a tale unfold . . . Popularly I am known here as "the countess" and God is my witness that in my earlier youth I was not far removed from that estate! For a time I was an actress, too. What did I say! I could unfold a tale from my life, from my past, which would have the advantage of not being invented!

Schierke. Maybe not. Nobody c'n tell.

Mrs. Knobbe. [*With renewed emphasis.*] My wretchedness is not invented, although it may seem so when I relate how, one night, sunk in the deepest abysses of my shame, I met on the street a cousin—the playmate of my youth—who is now captain in the horse-guards. He lives in the world: I live in the underworld ever since my father from pride of rank and race disowned me because in my earliest youth I had made a mistake. Oh, you have no conception of the dullness, the coarseness, the essential vulgarity that obtains in those circles. I am a trodden worm, sir, and yet not for a moment do I yearn to be there, in that glittering wretchedness . . .

Schierke. Maybe you don't mind comin' to the point now!

Hassenreuter. If you please, Mr. Schierke, all that interests me. So suppose you don't interrupt the lady for a while. [*To* MRS. KNOBBE.] You were speaking of your cousin. Didn't you say that he is a captain in the horse-guards?

Mrs. Knobbe. He was in plain clothes.

He is, however, a captain in the horse-guards. He recognized me at once and we dedicated some blessed though painful hours to memories. Acompanying him there was —I will not call his name—a very young lieutenant, a fair, sweet boy, delicate and brooding. Mr. Hassenreuter, I have forgotten what shame is! Was I not even, the other day, turned out of church? Why should a down-trodden, dishonoured, deserted creature, more than once punished by the laws—why should such an one hesitate to confess that *he* became the father of Helfgott Gundofried?

Hassenreuter. Of this baby that's been stolen from you?

Mrs. Knobbe. Yes, stolen! At least it is so asserted! It may be! But though my enemies are mighty and have every means at their command, I am not yet wholly convinced of it. And yet it may be a plot concocted by the parents of the child's father whose name you would be astonished to hear, for they represent one of the oldest and most illustrious families. Farewell! Whatever you may hear of me, sir, do not think that my better feelings have been wholly extinguished in the mire into which I am forced to cast myself. I need this mire in which I am on terms of equality with the dregs of mankind. Here, look! [*She thrusts forward her naked arm.*] Forgetfulness! Insensibility! I achieve it by means of chloral, of opium. Or I find it in the abysses of human life. And why not? To whom am I responsible? —There was a time when my dear mama was scolded by my father on my account! The maid had convulsions because of me! Mademoiselle and an English governess tore each other's *chignons* from their heads because each asserted that I loved *her* best——! Now . . .

Schierke. Aw, I tell you to shut it now! We can't take up people's time an' lock 'em up. [*He opens the library door.*] Now tell us if this here is your kid?

[Pauline, *staring at* Mrs. Knobbe *with eyes full of hatred, comes out first.* Mrs. Kielbacke, *carrying the child, comes next.* Schierke *removes the shawl that has been thrown over the child.*]

Pauline. What d'you want o' me? Why d'you come chasin' me? I ain' no gypsy! I don' go in people's houses stealin' their children! Eh? You're crazy. I wouldn't do no such thing. I ain't hardly got enough to eat for myself an' my own child. D'you s'pose I'm goin' to steal strange children an' feed 'em till they're grown when the one I got is trouble an' worry enough!

[Mrs. Knobbe *stares about her inquiringly and as if seeking help. Rapidly she draws a little flask from her pocket and pours its contents upon a handkerchief. The latter she carries swiftly to her mouth and nose, inhaling the fragrance of the perfume to keep her from fainting.*]

Hassenreuter. Well, why don't you speak, Mrs. Knobbe? This girl asserts that she is the mother of the child—not you.

[Mrs. Knobbe *lifts her umbrella in order to strike out with it. She is restrained by those present.*]

Schierke. That won't do! You can't practice no discipline like that here! You c'n do that when you're alone in your nursery downstairs.—The main thing is: who does this here kid belong to? An' so—now —Mrs. Knobbe, you just take care an' think so's to tell nothin' but the truth here! Well! Is it yours or is it her'n?

Mrs. Knobbe. [*Bursts out.*] I swear by the holy Mother of God, by Jesus Christ, Father, Son and Holy Ghost that I am the mother of this child.

Pauline. An' I swears by the Holy Mother o' God . . .

Hassenreuter. You'd better not if you want to save your soul! We may have a case here in which the circumstances are complicated in the extreme! It is possible, therefore, that you were about to swear in perfectly good faith. But you will have to admit that, though each of you may well be the mother of twins—two mothers for one child is unthinkable!

Walburga. [*Who, like* Mrs. Knobbe, *has been staring steadily at the child.*] Papa, papa, do look at the child a moment first!

Mrs. Kielbacke. [*Tearfully and horrified.*] Yes, the poor little crittur's been a'dyin', I believe, ever since I was in the other room there!

Schierke. What?

Hassenreuter. How? [*Energetically he strides forward and now regards the child*

carefully too.] The child is dead. There's no question about that! It seems that, invisible to us, one has been in our midst who has delivered judgment, truly according to the manner of Solomon, concerning the poor little passive object of all this strife.

Pauline. [*Who has not understood.*] What's the matter?

Schierke. Keep still!—You come along with me.

[MRS. KNOBBE *seems to have lost the power of speech. She puts her handkerchief into her mouth. A moaning sob is heard deep in her chest.* SCHIERKE, MRS. KIELBACKE *with the dead child, followed by* MRS. KNOBBE *and* PAULINE PIPERCARCKA, *leave the room. A dull murmur is heard from the outer hall.* HASSENREUTER *returns to the foreground after he has locked the door behind those who have left.*]

Hassenreuter. *Sic eunt fata hominum.* Invent something like that, if you can, my good Spitta.

ACT FOUR

The dwelling of the foreman-mason JOHN *as in the second act. It is eight o'clock on a Sunday morning.*

JOHN *is invisible behind the partition. From his splashing and snorting it is clear that he is performing his morning ablutions.*

QUAQUARO *has just entered. His hand is still on the knob of the outer door.*

Quaquaro. Tell me, Paul, is your wife at home?

John. [*From behind the partition.*] Not yet, Emil. My wife went with the boy out to my married sister's in Hangelsberg. But she's goin' to come back this mornin'. [*Drying his hands and face,* JOHN *appears in the door of the partition wall.*] Good mornin' to you, Emil.

Quaquaro. Mornin', Paul.

John. Well, what's the news? I didn't come from the train till about half an hour ago.

Quaquaro. Yes, I saw you goin' into the house an' mountin' the stairs.

John. [*In a jolly frame of mind.*] That's right, Emil! You're a regular old watchdog, eh?

Quaquaro. Tell, me, Paul: How long has your wife'n the kid been out in Hangelsberg?

John. Oh, that must be somethin' like a week now, Emil. D'you want anythin' of her? I guess she paid her rent an' on time all right. By the way, I might as well give you notice right now. We got it all fixed. We're goin' to move on the first of October. I got mother to the point at last that we c'n move outa this here shaky old barracks an' into a better neighbourhood.

Quaquaro. So you ain't goin' back to Hamburg no more?

John. Naw. It's a good sayin': Stay at home an' make an honest livin'! I'm not goin' outa town no more. Not a bit of it! First of all, it's no sort o' life, goin' from one lodgin' to another. An' then—a man don't get no younger neither! The girls, they ain't so hot after you no more . . . No, it's a good thing that all this wanderin' about is goin' to end.

Quaquaro. Your wife—she's a fine schemer.

John. [*Merrily.*] Well, this is a brand new household what's jus' had a child born into it. I said to the boss: I'm a newly married man! Then he axed me if my first wife was dead. On the contrary an' not a bit of it, I says. She's alive an' kickin', so that she's jus' given birth to a kickin' young citizen o' Berlin, that's what! When I was travelin' along from Hamburg this mornin' by all the old stations—Hamburg, Stendal, Ultzen—an' got outa the fourth-class coach at the Lehrter station with all my duds, the devil take me if I didn't thank God with a sigh. I guess he didn't hear on account o' the noise o' the trains.

Quaquaro. Did you hear, Paul, that Mrs. Knobbe's youngest over the way has been taken off again?

John. No. What chance did I have to hear that? But if it's dead, it's a good thing, Emil. When I saw the poor crittur a week ago when it had convulsions an' Selma brought it in an' me an' mother gave it a spoonful o' sugar an' water—well, it was pretty near ready for heaven then.

Quaquaro. An' you mean to tell me that you didn't hear nothin' o' the circum-

stances, about the how an' the why o' that child's death?

John. Naw! [*He fetches a long tobacco pipe from behind the sofa.*] Wait a minute! I'll light a pipe first! I didn't have no chanct to hear nothin'.

Quaquaro. Well, I'm surprised that your wife didn't write you nothin' at all.

John. Aw, since we has a child o' our own, mother's taken no interest in them Knobbe brats no more.

Quaquaro. [*Observing* JOHN *with lurking curiosity.*] Your wife was reel crazy to have a son, wasn't she?

John. Well, that's natural. D'you think I wasn't? What's a man to work for? What do I slave away for? It's different thing savin' a good lump o' money for your own son from doin' it for your sister's children.

Quaquaro. So you don't know that a strange girl came here an' swore that the Knobbe woman's child wasn't hers but belonged to the girl?

John. Is that so? Well, Mrs. Knobbe an' child stealin'—them two things don't go together. Now if it'd been mother, that would ha' been more likely. But not that Knobbe woman! But tell me, Emil, what's all this here business about?

Quaquaro. Well, one person says one thing an' another says another. The Knobbe woman says that certain people has started a plot with detectives an' such like to get hold o' the brat. An' there ain't no doubt o' this. It's proved that the child was hers. C'n you maybe give me a tip as to where your brother-in-law's been keepin' hisself the past few days?

John. You mean the butcher in Hangelsberg?

Quaquaro. Naw, I don' mean the husband o' your sister, but the feller what's brother o' your wife.

John. It's Bruno you mean?

Quaquaro. Sure, that's the feller.

John. How do I know? I'd sooner be watchin' if the dogs still plays on the curb. I don't want to have no dealin's with Bruno.

Quaquaro. Listen to me, Paul. But don't get mad. They knows at the police station that Bruno was seen in company o' the Polish girl what wanted to claim this here child, first right outside o' the door here an' then at a certain place on Shore street where the tanners sometimes looses their soakin' hides. An' now the girl's jus' disappeared. I don' know nothin' o' the particulars, excep' that the police is huntin' for the girl.

John. [*Resolutely putting aside the long pipe which he had lit.*] I don' know, but I can't take no enjoyment in it this mornin'. I don' know what's gotten into me. I was as jolly as can be. An' now all of a sudden I feel so dam' mean I'd like to go straight back to Hamburg an' hear an' see nothin' more!—Why d'you come aroun' with stories like that?

Quaquaro. I jus' thought I'd tell you what happened while you an' your wife was away right here in your own house?

John. In my own house?

Quaquaro. That's it! Yessir! They says that Selma pushed the perambulator with her little brother in here where the strange girl an' her friend came an' took him an' carried him off. But upstairs, in the actor's place, they caught her.

John. What's that?

Quaquaro. So up there the strange girl an' the Knobbe woman pretty near tore each other's hair out over the child's body.

John. What I'd like to know is how all that concerns me? Ain't there trouble here over some girl most o' the time? Let 'em go on! I don' care! That is to say, Emil, if there ain't more to it than you're tellin' me.

Quaquaro. That's why I come to you! There is more. The girl said in front o' witnesses more'n onct that that little crittur o' Knobbe's was her own an' that she had expressly given it in board to your wife.

John. [*First taken aback, then relieved. Laughing.*] She ain't quite right in her upper story. That's all.

[ERICH SPITTA *enters.*]

Spitta. Good morning, Mr. John.

John. Good mornin', Mr. Spitta. [*To* QUAQUARO, *who is still loitering in the door.*] It's all right, Emil. I'll take notice o' what you says an' act accordin'.

[QUAQUARO *exit.*]

John. Now jus' look at a feller like that, Mr. Spitta. He's more'n half a gaol bird an' yet he knows how to make hisself a favourite with the district commissioner at

headquarters! An' then he goes aroun' pokin' his nose into honest folks' affairs.

Spitta. Has Miss Walburga Hassenreuter been asking after me, Mr. John?

John. Not up to this time; not that I knows of! [*He opens the door to the hall.*] Selma! Excuse me a minute, will you? Selma! I gotta know what that there girl c'n tell me.

[Selma Knobbe *enters.*]

Selma. [*Still at the door.*] What d'you want?

John. You shut the door a minute an' come in! An' now tell me, girl, what's all this that happened in this room about your little dead brother and the strange girl?

Selma. [*Who has, obviously, a bad conscience, gradually comes forward watchfully. She now answers glibly and volubly.*] I pushed the perambulator over into the room here. Your wife wasn't in an' so I thinks that maybe here there'd be more quiet, 'cause my little brother, you know, he was sick anyhow an' cryin' all the time. An' then, all of a sudden, a gentleman an' a lady an' another woman all comes in here, an' they picked the little feller right outa the carridge an' put clean clothes on him an' carried him off.

John. An' then the lady said as how it was her child an' how she'd given it in board with mother, with my old woman?

Selma. [*Lies.*] Naw, not a bit. I'd know about that if it was so.

John. [*Bangs his fist on the table.*] Well, damn it all, it'd be a idjit's trick to have said that.

Spitta. Permit me, but she did say that. I take it you're talking of the incident with the two women that took place upstairs at manager Hassenreuter's?

John. Did you see that? Was you there when the Knobbe woman an' the other one was disputin' about the little crittur?

Spitta. Yes, certainly. I was present throughout.

Selma. I tell you all I knows. An' I couldn't say no more if officer Schierke or the tall police lieutenant hisself was to examine me for hours an' hours. I don' know nothin'. An' what I don' know I can't tell.

John. The lieutenant examined you?

Selma. They wanted to take mama to the lock-up because people went an' lied. They said that our little baby was starved to death.

John. Aha! 's that so? Well, Selma, s'pose you go over there an' cook a little coffee.

[Selma *goes over to the stove where she prepares coffee for* John. John *himself goes up to his working table, takes up the compass. Then he draws lines, using a piece of rail as a ruler.*]

Spitta. [*Conquering his diffidence and shame.*] I really hoped to meet your wife here, Mr. John. Someone told me that your wife has been in the habit of lending out small sums to students against security. And I am somewhat embarrassed.

John. Maybe that's so. But tha's mother's business, Mr. Spitta.

Spitta. To be quite frank with you, if I don't get hold of some money by to-night, the few books and other possessions I have will be attached for rent by my landlady and I'll be put into the street.

John. I thought your father was a preacher.

Spitta. So he is. But for that very reason and because I don't want to become a preacher, too, he and I had a terrible quarrel last night. I won't ever accept a farthing from him any more.

John. [*Busy over his drawing.*] Then it'll serve him right if you starve or break your neck.

Spitta. Men like myself don't starve, Mr. John. But if, by any chance, I were to go to the dogs—I shouldn't greatly care.

John. No one wouldn't believe how many half-starved nincompoops there is among you stoodents. But none o' you wants to put your hand to some reel work.—[*The distant sound of thunder is heard.* John *looks out through the window.*]—Sultry day. It's thunderin' now.

Spitta. You can't say that of me, Mr. John, that I haven't been willing to do real work. I've given lessons, I've addressed envelopes for business houses! I've been through everything and in all these attempts I've not only toiled away the days but also the nights. And at the same time I've ground away at my studies like anything!

John. Man alive, go to Hamburg an' let 'em give you a job as a bricklayer. When

I was your age I was makin' as much as twelve crowns a day in Hamburg.

Spitta. That may be. But I'm a brain worker.

John. I know that kind.

Spitta. Is that so? I don't think you do know that kind, Mr. John. I beg you not to forget that your Socialist leaders—your Bebels and your Liebknechts—are brain workers too.

John. All right. Come on, then! Let's have some breakfast. Things look mighty different after a man's had a good bite o' breakfast. I s'pose you ain't had any yet, Mr. Spitta?

Spitta. No, frankly, not to-day.

John. Well, then the first thing is to get somethin' warm down your throat.

Spitta. There's time enough for that.

John. I don' know. You're lookin' pretty well done up. An' I passed the night on the train too. [*To* SELMA, *who has brought in a little linen bag filled with rolls.*] Hurry an' bring another cup over here.

[*He has seated himself at his ease on the sofa, dips a roll into the coffee and begins to eat and drink.*]

Spitta. [*Who has not sat down yet.*] It's really pleasanter to pass a summer night in the open if one can't sleep anyhow. And I didn't sleep for one minute.

John. I'd like to see the feller what c'n sleep when he's outa cash. When a man's down in the world he has most company outa doors too. [*He suddenly stops chewing.*]—Come here, Selma, an' tell me exackly just how it was with that there girl an' the child that she took outa our room here.

Selma. I don' know what to do. Everybody axes me that. Mama keeps axin' me about it all day long; if I seen Bruno Mechelke; if I know who it was that stole the costumes from the actor's loft up there! If it goes on that way . . .

John. [*Energetically.*] Girl, why didn't you cry out when the gentleman and the young lady took your little brother outa his carridge?

Selma. I didn't think nothin' 'd happen to him excep' that he'd get some clean clothes.

John. [*Grasps* SELMA *by the wrist.*] Well, you come along with me now. We'll go over an' see your mother.

[JOHN *and* SELMA *leave the room. As soon as they are gone* SPITTA *begins to eat ravenously. Soon thereafter* WALBURGA *appears. She is in great haste and strongly excited.*]

Walburga. Are you alone?

Spitta. For the moment, yes. Good morning, Walburga.

Walburga. Am I too late? It was only by the greatest cunning, by the greatest determination, by the most ruthless disregard of everything that I succeeded in getting away from home. My younger sister tried to bar the door. Even the servant girl! But I told mama that if they wouldn't let me out through the door, they might just as well bar the window, else I'd reach the street through it, although it's three stories high. I flew. I'm more dead than alive. But I am prepared for anything. How was it with your father, Erich?

Spitta. We have parted. He thought that I was going out to eat husks with the swine as the Prodigal Son did, and told me not to take it into my mind ever again to cross the threshold of my father's house in my future capacity as acrobat or bareback rider, as he was pleased to express it. His door was not open to such scum! Well, I'll fight it down! Only I'm sorry for my poor, dear mother.—You can't imagine with what abysmal hatred a man of his kind considers the theatre and everything connected with it. The heaviest curse is not strong enough to express his feelings. An actor is, to his mind, *a priori,* the worst, most contemptible scamp imaginable.

Walburga. I've found out, too, how papa discovered our secret.

Spitta. My father gave him your picture.

Wallburga. O Erich, if you knew with what awful, with what horrible names papa overwhelmed me in his rage. And I had to be silent through it all. I might have said something that would have silenced all his lofty moral discourses and made him quite helpless before me. I was almost on the point of saying it, too. But I felt so ashamed for him! My tongue refused to form the words! I couldn't say it, Erich! Finally mama had to intervene. He struck me! For eight or nine hours he

locked me in a dark alcove—to break my stubbornness, as he put it, Erich. Well, he won't succeed! He won't break it!

Spitta. [*Taking* WALBURGA *into his arms.*] You dear, brave girl! I am beginning to see now what I possess in having your love, what a treasure you are! [*Passionately.*] And how beautiful you look, Walburga!

Walburga. Don't! Don't—I trust you, Erich; that's all.

Spitta. And you shall not be disappointed, dearest. You see, a man like me in whom everything is still in a ferment, who feels that he was born to achieve something great and significant but something which, for the present, he can make sufficiently clear neither to himself nor to the world—such a man has, at twenty, every man's hand against his and is a burden and a laughing-stock to all the world. But believe me: it will not always be so! The germs of the future lie in us! The soil is being loosened even now by the budding shoots! Unseen to-day, *we* are the harvest of the future! We *are* the future! And the time will come when all this great and beautiful world will be ours!

Walburga. Ah, go on, Erich! What you say heals my heart.

Spitta. Walburga, I did more, last night! I flung straight out into my father's face, just as I felt it, my accusation of the crime committed against my sister. And that made the break definite and unbridgeable. He said stubbornly: He had no knowledge of such a daughter as I was describing. Such a daughter had no existence in his soul, and it seemed to him that his son would also soon cease to exist there. O these Christians! O these servants of the good shepherd who took the lost lamb with double tenderness into his arms! O thou good Shepherd, how have your words been perverted! How have your eternal truths been falsified into their exact contrary! But to-day when I sat amidst the flash of lightning and the roll of thunder in the *Tiergarten* and certain Berlin hyænas were prowling about me, I felt the crushed and restless soul of my sister close beside me. How many nights, in her poor life, may she not have sat shelterless on such benches perhaps on this very bench in the *Tiergarten,* in order to consider in her loneliness, her degradation, her outcast estate, how, two thousand years after the birth of Christ, this most Christian world is drenched with Christianity and with the love of its fellowmen! But whatever she thought, this is what I think: the poor harlot, the wretched sinner who is yet above the righteous, who is weighed down by the sins of the world, the poor outcast and her terrible accusation shall never die in my soul! And into this flame of our souls we must cast all the wretchedness, all the lamentations of the oppressed and the disinherited! Thus shall my sister stay truly alive, Walburga, and effect noble ends before the face of God through the ethical impulse that lends wings to my soul, and that will be more powerful than all the evil, heartless parson's morality in the world.

Walburga. You were in the *Tiergarten* all night, Erich? Is that the reason why your hands are so icy cold, and why you look so utterly worn out? Erich, you must take my purse! No, please, you must! Oh, I assure you what is mine is yours! If you don't feel that, you don't love me. Erich, you're suffering! If you don't take my few pennies, I'll refuse all nourishment at home! By heaven, I'll do it, I'll do it, unless you're sensible about that!

Spitta. [*Chokes down his rising tears and sits down.*] I'm nervous; I'm overwrought.

Walburga. [*Puts her purse into his pocket.*] And you see, Erich, this is the real reason why I asked you to meet me here. To add to all my misfortunes I received yesterday this summons from the court.

Spitta. [*Regards a document which she hands to him.*] Look here? What's behind this, Walburga?

Walburga. I'm quite sure that it must have some connection with the stolen goods upstairs in the loft. But it does disquiet me terribly. If papa were to discover this . . . oh, what would I do then?

[MRS. JOHN *enters, carrying the child in her arms. She is dressed for the street, and looks dusty and harassed.*]

Mrs. John. [*Frightened, suspicious.*] Well, what d'you want here? Is Paul home yet? I jus' went down in the street a little

with the baby. [*She carries the child behind the partition.*]

Walburga. Erich, do mention the summons to Mrs. John!

Mrs. John. Why, Paul's at home. There's his things!

Spitta. Miss Hassenreuter wanted very much to talk to you. She received a summons to appear in court. It's probably about those things that were stolen from the loft. You know.

Mrs. John. [*Emerging from behind the partition.*] What's that? You reelly got a summons, Miss Walburga? Well, then you better look out! I ain't jokin'. An' maybe you're thinkin' o' the black man!

Spitta. What you're saying there is quite incomprehensible, Mrs. John.

Mrs. John. [*Taking up her domestic tasks.*] Did you hear that 'way out in the Lauben settlement, beyond the Halle Gate, the lightenin' struck a man an' a woman an' a little girl o' seven this mornin'. It was right under a tall poplar tree.

Spitta. No, Mrs. John, we didn't hear that.

Mrs. John. The rain's splashin' down again.

[*One hears a shower of rain beginning to fall.*]

Walburga. [*Nervously.*] Come, Erich, let's get out into the open, anyhow.

Mrs. John. [*Speaking louder and louder in her incoherent terror.*] An' I tell you another thing: I was talking to the woman what was struck by lightenin' jus' a short time before. An' she says—now listen to me, Mr. Spitta—if you takes a dead child what's lyin' in its carridge an' pushes it out into the sun . . . but it's gotta be summer an' midday . . . it'll draw breath, it'll cry, it'll come back to life!—You don't believe that, eh? But I seen that with my own eyes! [*She circles about the room in a strange fashion, apparently becoming quite oblivious of the presence of the two young people.*]

Walburga. Look here, Mrs. John is positively uncanny! Let's go!

Mrs. John. [*Speaking still louder.*] You don' believe that, that it'll come to life again, eh? I tell you, its mother c'n come an' take it. But it's gotta be nursed right off.

Spitta. Good-bye, Mrs. John.

Mrs. John. [*In strange excitement accompanies the two young people to the door. Speaking still more loudly.*] You don' believe that! But it's the solemn truth, Mr. Spitta!

[Spitta *and* Walburga *leave the room.*]

Mrs. John. [*Still holding the door in her hand calls out after them.*] Anybody that don' believe that don' know nothin' o' the whole secret that I discovered.

[*The foreman-mason* John *appears in the door and enters at once.*]

John. Why, there you are, mother! I'm glad to see you. What's that there secret you're talkin' about?

Mrs. John. [*As though awakening, grasps her head.*] Me?—Did I say somethin' about a secret?

John. That you did unless I'm hard o' hearin'. An' it's reelly you unless it's a ghost.

Mrs. John. [*Surprised and frightened.*] Why d'you think I might be a ghost?

John. [*Pats his wife good-naturedly on the back.*] Come now, Jette, don't bite me. I'm reel glad, that I am, that you're here again with the little kid! [*He goes behind the partition.*] But it's lookin' a little measly.

Mrs. John. The milk didn't agree with him. An' that's because out there in the country the cows is already gettin' green fodder. I got milk here from the dairy company that comes from dry fed cows.

John. [*Reappears in the main room.*] That's what I'm sayin'. Why did you have to go an' take the child on the train an' outa town. The city is healthier. That's my notion.

Mrs. John. I'm goin' to stay at home now, Paul.

John. In Hamburg everythin' is settled, too. To-day at noon I'm goin' to meet Karl an' then he'll tell me when I c'n start workin' for the new boss!—Look here: I brought somethin' with me, too. [*He takes a small child's rattle from his breeches pocket and shakes it.*]

Mrs. John. What's that?

John. That's somethin' to bring a bit o' life into the place, 'cause it's pretty quiet inside in Berlin here! Listen how the kid's crowin'. [*The child is heard making happy little noises.*] I tell you, mother, when a

little kid goes on that way—there ain't nothin' I'd take for it!

Mrs. John. Have you seen anybody yet?

John. No!—Leastways only Quaquaro early this mornin'.

Mrs. John. [*In timid suspense.*] Well . . . ?

John. Oh, never mind! Nothin'! There was nothin' to it.

Mrs. John. [*As before.*] What did he say?

John. What d'you think he said? But if you're bound to know—'tain't no use talkin' o' such things Sunday mornin'—he axed me after Bruno again.

Mrs. John. [*Pale and speaking hastily.*] What do they say Bruno has done again?

John. Nothin'. Here, come'n drink a little coffee, Jette, an' don' get excited! It ain't your fault that you got a brother like that. We don't has to concern ourselves about other people.

Mrs. John. I'd like to know what an old fool like that what spies aroun' all day long has always gotta be talkin' about Bruno.

John. Jette, don' bother me about Bruno —You see . . . aw, what's the use . . . might as well keep still! . . . But if I was goin' to tell you the truth, I'd say that it wouldn't surprise me if some day Bruno'd come to a pretty bad end right out in the yard o' the gaol, too—a quick end. [Mrs. John *sits down heavily beside the table. She grows grey in the face and breathes with difficulty.*] Maybe not! Maybe not! Don't take it to heart so right off!—How's the sister?

Mrs. John. I don' know.

John. Why, I thought you was out there visitin' her?

Mrs. John. [*Looks at him absently.*] Where was I?

John. Well, you see, Jette, that's the way it is with you women! You're jus' shakin', but oh no—you don' want to go to no doctor! An' it'll end maybe by your havin' to take to your bed. That's what comes o' neglectin' nature.

Mrs. John. [*Throwing her arms about* John's *neck.*] Paul, you're goin' to leave me! For God's sake, tell me right out that it's so! Don' fool me aroun' an' cheat me! Tell me right out!

John. What's the matter with you to-day, Henrietta?

Mrs. John. [*Pulling herself together.*] Don' attend to my fool talk. I ain't had no rest all night—that's it. An' then I got up reel early, an' anyhow, it ain't nothin' but that I'm a bit weak yet.

John. Then you better lie down flat on your back an' rest a little. [Mrs. John *throws herself on the sofa and stares at the ceiling.*] Maybe you'd better comb yourself a bit afterwards, Jette!—It musta been mighty dusty on the train for you to be jus' covered all over with sand the way you are! [Mrs. John *does not answer but continues staring at the ceiling.*] I must go an' bring that there little feller into the light a bit. [*He goes behind the partition.*]

Mrs. John. How long has we been married, Paul?

John. [*Plays with the rattle behind the partition. Then answers.*] That was in eighteen hundred and seventy-two, jus' as I came back from the war.

Mrs. John. Then you came to father, didn't you? An' you assoomed a grand position an' you had the Iron Cross on the left side o' your chest.

John. [*Appears, swinging the rattle and carrying the child on its pillow. He speaks merrily.*] That's so, mother. An' I got it yet. If you want to see it, I'll pin it on.

Mrs. John. [*Still stretched out on the sofa.*] An' then you came to me an' you said that I wasn't to be so busy all the time . . . goin' up an' down, runnin' upstairs an' downstairs . . . that I was to be a bit more easygoin'.

John. An' I'm still sayin' that same thing to-day.

Mrs. John. An' then you tickled me with your moustache an' kissed me right behind my left ear. An' then . . .

John. Then it didn't take long for us to agree, eh?

Mrs. John. Yes, an' I laughed an', bit by bit, I looked at myself in every one o' your brass buttons. I was lookin' different then! An' then you said . . .

John. Well, mother, you're a great one for rememberin' things, I must say!

Mrs. John. An' then you said: When we has a boy, an' that'll be soon, he c'n follow the flag into the field too "with God for King an' country."

John. [*Sings to the child, playing with the rattle.*]

"To heaven he turns his glances bold
Whence gaze the hero sires of old:
The Rhine, the Rhine, the German
Rhine!" . . .
Well, an' now that I has a little feller like that I ain't half so keen on sendin' him to the war to be food for powder. [*He retires with the child behind the partition.*]

Mrs. John. [*Still staring at the ceiling.*] Paul, Paul! Seems as if all that was a hundred years ago!

John. [*Reappears from behind the partition without the child.*] Not as long ago as all that.

Mrs. John. Look here, what d'you think? How would it be if you was to take me an' the child an' go to America?

John. Now listen here, Jette! What's gotten into you, anyhow? What is it? Looks as if there was nothin' but ghosts aroun' me here! You know I has a good easy temper! When the workmen heave bricks at each other, I don't even get excited. An' what do they say? Paul has a comfortable nature. But now: what's this here? The sun's shinin'; it's bright daylight! I can't *see* nothin'; that's a fac'. But somethin's titterin' an' whisperin' an' creepin' aroun' in here. Only when I stretches out my hand I can't lay hold on nothin'! Now I wants to know what there is to this here story about the strange girl what came to the room. Is it true?

Mrs. John. You heard, Paul, that the young lady didn't come back no more. An' that shows you, don't it . . .

John. I hear what you're sayin'. But your lips is fair blue an' your eyes look as if somebody was tormentin' you.

Mrs. John. [*Suddenly changing her attitude.*] Yes. Why do you leave me alone year in an' year out, Paul? I sits here like in a cave an' I ain't got a soul to who I c'n say what I'm thinkin'. Many a time I've sat here an' axed myself why I works an' works, why I skimps an' saves to get together a few crowns, an' find good investments for your earnin's an' try to add to 'em. Why? Was all that to go to strangers? Paul, it's you who's been the ruin o' me. [*She lays her head on the table and bursts out in sobs.*]

[*Softly and with feline stealth* Bruno Mechelke *enters the room at this moment. He has on his Sunday duds, a sprig of lilac in his hat and a great bunch of it in his hand.* John *drums with his fingers on the window and does not observe him.*]

Mrs. John. [*Has gradually realised* Bruno's *presence as though he were a ghost.*] Bruno, is that you?

Bruno. [*Who has recognised* John *in a flash, softly.*] Sure, it's me, Jette.

Mrs. John. Where d'you come from? What d'you want?

Bruno. I been dancin' all night, Jette! You c'n see, can't you, that I'm dam' jolly?

John. [*Has been staring steadily at* Bruno. *A dangerous pallor has overspread his face. He now goes slowly to a small cupboard, takes out an old army revolver and loads it.* Mrs. John *does not observe this.*] You! Listen! I'll tell you somethin'—somethin' you forgot, maybe. There ain't no reason on God's earth why I shouldn't pull this here trigger! You scoundrel! You ain't fit to be among human bein's! I told you . . . las' fall it was . . . that I'd shoot you down if I ever laid eyes on you in my home again! Now go . . . or I'll . . . shoot. Y'understan'?

Bruno. Aw, I ain't scared o' your jelly squirter.

Mrs. John. [*Observes that* John, *losing control of himself, is slowly approaching* Bruno *with the weapon and raising it.*] Then kill me too, Paul. 'Cause he's my brother.

John. [*Looks at her long, seems to awaken and change his mind.*] All right. [*He replaces the revolver carefully in the cupboard.*] You're right, anyhow, Jette! It's hell, Jette, that your name's got to be on the tongue of a crittur like that. All right. The powder'd be too good too. This here little pistol's tasted the blood o' two French cavalry men! Heroes they was! An' I don't want it to drink no dirt.

Bruno. I ain' doubtin' that there's dirt in your head! An' if it hadn't been that you board with my sister here I'd ha' let the light into you long ago, you dirt eater, so you'd ha' bled for weeks.

John. [*With tense restraint.*] Tell me again, Jette, that it's your brother.

Mrs. John. Go, Paul, will you? I'll get him away all right! You know's well as I

that I can't help it now that Bruno's my own brother.

John. All right. Then I'm one too many here. You c'n bill an' coo. [*He is dressed for the street as it is and hence proceeds to go. Close by* BRUNO *he stands still.*] You scamp! You worried your father into his grave. Your sister might better ha' let you starve behind some fence rather'n raise you an' litter the earth with another criminal like you. I'll be back in half an hour! But I won't be alone. I'll have the sergeant with me! [*He leaves by the outer door, putting on his slouch hat.*]

[*So soon as* JOHN *has disappeared* BRUNO *turns and spits out after him toward the door.*]

Bruno. If I ever gets hold o' you!

Mrs. John. Why d'you come, Bruno? Tell me, what's the matter?

Bruno. Tin's what you gotta give me. Or I'll go to hell.

Mrs. John. [*Locks and latches the outer door.*] Wait till I close the door! Now, what's the matter? Where d'you come from? Where has you been?

Bruno. Oh, I danced about half the night an' then, about sunrise, I went out into the country for a bit.

Mrs. John. Did Quaquaro see you comin' in, Bruno? Then you better look out that you ain't walked into no trap.

Bruno. No danger. I crossed the yard an' then went through the cellar o' my friend what deals in junk an' after that up through the loft.

Mrs. John. Well, an' what happened?

Bruno. Don' fool aroun', Jette. I gotta have railroad fare. I gotta take to my heels or I'll go straight to hell.

Mrs. John. An' what did you do with that there girl?

Bruno. Oh, I found a way, Jette!

Mrs. John. What's the meanin' o' that?

Bruno. Oh, I managed to make her a little more accommodatin' all right!

Mrs. John. An' is it a sure thing that she won't come back now?

Bruno. Sure. I don' believe that she'll come again! But that wasn't no easy piece of work, Jette. But I tell you . . . gimme somethin' to drink—quick! . . . I tell you, you made me thirsty with your damned business—thirsty, an' hot as hell. [*He drains a jug full of water.*]

Mrs. John. People saw you outside the door with the girl.

Bruno. I had to make a engagement with Arthur. She didn't want to have nothin' to do with me. But Arthur, he came dancin' along in his fine clothes an' he managed to drag her along to a bar. She swallowed the bait right down when he told her as how her intended was waitin' for her there. [*He trills out, capering about convulsively.*]

"All we does in life's to go
Up an' down an' to an' fro
From a tap-room to a show!"

Mrs. John. Well, an' then?

Bruno. Then she wanted to get away 'cause Arthur said that her intended had gone off! Then I wanted to go along with her a little bit an' Arthur an' Adolph, they came along. Next we dropped in the ladies' entrance at Kalinich's an' what with tastin' a lot o' toddy an' other liquors she got good an' tipsy. An' then she staid all night with a woman what's Arthur's sweetheart. All next day there was always two or three of us boys after her, didn't let her go, an' played all kinds o' tricks, an' things got jollier an' jollier.

[*The church bells of the Sunday morning services begin to ring.*]

Bruno. [*Goes on.*] But the money's gone. I needs crowns an' pennies, Jette.

Mrs. John. [*Rummaging for money.*] How much has you got to have?

Bruno. [*Listening to the bells.*] What?

Mrs. John. Money!

Bruno. The old bag o' bones in the junk shop downstairs was thinkin' as how I'd better get across the Russian frontier! Listen, Jette, how the bells is ringing'.

Mrs. John. Why do you has to get acrost the frontier?

Bruno. Take a wet towel, Jette, an' put a little vinegar on it. I been bothered with this here dam' nosebleed all night. [*He presses his handkerchief to his nose.*]

Mrs. John. [*Breathing convulsively, brings a towel.*] Who was it scratched your wrist into shreds that way?

Bruno. [*Listening to the bells.*] Half past three o'clock this mornin' she could ha' heard them bells yet.

Mrs. John. O Jesus, my Saviour! That ain't true! That can't noways be possible!

I didn't tell you nothin' like that, Bruno! Bruno, I has to sit down. Oh! [*She sits down.*] That's what our father foretold to me on his dyin' bed.

Bruno. It ain't so easy jokin' with me. If you go to see Minna, jus' tell her that I got the trick o' that kind o' thing an' that them goin's on with Karl an' with Fritz has to stop.

Mrs. John. But, Bruno, if they was to catch you!

Bruno. Well, then I has to swing, an' out at the Charity hospital they got another stiff to dissect.

Mrs. John. [*Giving him money.*] Oh, that ain't true. What did you do, Bruno?

Bruno. You're a crazy old crittur, Jette. —[*He puts his hand on her not without a tremor of emotion.*] You always says as how I ain't good for nothin'. But when things can't go on no more, then you needs me, Jette.

Mrs. John. Well, but how? Did you threaten the girl that she wasn't to let herself be seen no more? That's what you ought to ha' done, Bruno! An' did you?

Bruno. I danced with her half the night. An' then we went out on the street. Well, a gentleman came along, y'understand'? Well, when I told him that I had some little business o' my own to transact with the lady an' pulled my brass-knuckles outa my breeches, o' course he took to his heels. —Then I says to her, says I: Don't you be scared. If you're peaceable an' don' make no outcry an' don' come no more to my sister axin' after the child—well, we c'n make a reel friendly bargain. So she toddled along with me a ways.

Mrs. John. Well, an' then?

Bruno. Well, she didn't want to! An' all of a sudden she went for my throat that I thought it'd be the end o' me then an' there! Like a dawg she went for me hot an' heavy! An' then . . . then I got a little bit excited too—an' then, well . . . that's how it come . . .

Mrs. John. [*Sunk in horror.*] What time d'you say it was?

Bruno. It must ha' been somewhere between three an' four. The moon had a big ring aroun' it. Out on the square there was a dam' cur behind the planks what got up an' howled. Then it began to drip an' soon a thunderstorm came up.

Mrs. John. [*Changed and with sudden self-mastery.*] It's all right. Go on. She don' deserve no better.

Bruno. Good-bye. I s'pose we ain't goin' to see each other for years an' years.

Mrs. John. Where you goin' to?

Bruno. First of all I gotta lie flat on my back for a couple o' hours. I'm goin' to Fritz's. He's got a room for rent in the old police station right acrost from the Fisher's Bridge. I'm safe there all right. If there's anythin' of a outcry you c'n lemme know.

Mrs. John. Don' you want to take a peek at the child onct more?

Bruno. [*Trembling.*] Naw!

Mrs. John. Why not?

Bruno. No, Jette, not in this here life! Good-bye, Jette. Hol' on a minute: Here I got a horseshoe. .[*He puts the horseshoe on the table.*] I found it. That'll bring you good luck. I don' need it.

[*Stealthily as he has come,* Bruno Mechelke *also disappears.* Mrs. John, *her eyes wide with horror, stares at the spot where he stood. Then she totters backward a few paces, presses her hands, clenched convulsively as if in prayer, against her mouth, and collapses, still trying in vain to stammer out a prayerful appeal to heaven.*]

Mrs. John. I ain't no murderer! I ain't no murderer! I didn't want that to happen!

ACT FIVE

John's *room.* Mrs. John *is asleep on the sofa.* Walburga *and* Spitta *enter from the outer hall. The loud playing of a military band is heard from the street.*

Spitta. No one is here.

Walburga. Oh, yes, there is, Erich. Mrs. John! She's asleep here.

Spitta. [*Approaching the sofa together with* Walburga.] Is she asleep? So she is! I don't understand how anyone can sleep amidst this noise.

[*The music of the band trails off into silence.*]

Walburga. Oh, Erich, sh! I have a perfect horror of the woman. Can you understand anyhow why policemen are guarding

the entrance downstairs and why they won't let us go out into the street? I'm so awfully afraid that, maybe, they'll arrest us and take us along to the station.

Spitta. Oh, but there's not the slightest danger Walburga! You're seeing ghosts by broad daylight.

Walburga. When the plain clothes man came up to you and looked at us and you asked him who he was and he showed his badge under his coat, I assure you, at that moment, the stairs and the hall suddenly began to go around with me.

Spitta. They're looking for a criminal, Walburga. It is a so-called raid that is going on here, a kind of man hunt such as the criminal police is at times obliged to undertake.

Walburga. And you can believe me, too, Erich, that I heard papa's voice. He was talking quite loudly to some one.

Spitta. You are nervous. You may have been mistaken.

Walburga. [*Frightened at* MRS. JOHN, *who is speaking in her sleep.*] Listen to her: do!

Spitta. Great drops of sweat are standing on her forehead. Come here! Just look at the rusty old horseshoe that she is clasping with both hands.

Walburga. [*Listens and starts with fright again.*] Papa!

Spitta. I don't understand you. Let him come, Walburga. The essential thing is that one knows what one wants and that one has a clean conscience. I am ready. I long for the explanation to come about.

[*A loud knocking is heard at the door.*]

Spitta. [*Firmly.*] Come in!

[MRS. HASSENREUTER *enters, more out of breath than usual. An expression of relief comes over her face as she catches sight of her daughter.*]

Mrs. Hassenreuter. Thank God! There you are, children! [*Trembling,* WALBURGA *throws herself into her mother's arms.*] Girlie, but what a fright you've given your old mother.

[*A pause in which only the breathing of* MRS. HASSENREUTER *is heard.*]

Walburga. Forgive me, mama: I couldn't act differently.

Mrs. Hassenreuter. Oh, no! One doesn't write letters containing such thoughts to one's own mother. And especially not to a mother like me. If your soul is in pain you know very well that you can always count on me for help and counsel. I'm not a monster, and I was young myself once. But to threaten to drown yourself . . . and things like that . . . no, that's all wrong. You shouldn't have done that. Surely you agree with me, Mr. Spitta. And now this very minute . . . heavens, how you both look! . . . this very minute you must both come home with me!—What's the matter with Mrs. John?

Walburga. Oh yes, help us! Don't forsake us! Take us with you, mama! Oh, I'm *so* glad that you're here! I was just paralysed with fright!

Mrs. Hassenreuter. Very well, then. Come along. That would be the last straw if one had to be prepared for such desperate follies from you, Mr. Spitta, or from this child! At your age one should have courage. If everything doesn't go quite smoothly you have no right to think of expedients by which one has nothing to gain and everything to lose. We live but once, after all.

Spitta. Oh, I have courage! And I'm not thinking of putting an end to myself as one who is weary and defeated . . . unless Walburga is refused to me. In that case, to be sure, my determination is firm. It doesn't in the least undermine my belief in myself or in my future that I am poor for the present and have to take my dinner occasionally in the people's kitchen. And I am sure Walburga is equally convinced that a day must come that will indemnify us for all the dark and difficult hours of the present.

Mrs. Hassenreuter. Life is long; and you're almost children to-day. It's not so very bad for a student to have to take an occasional meal in the people's kitchen. It would be much worse, however, for Walburga as a married woman. And I hope for the sake of you both that you'll wait till something in the nature of a hearthstone of your own with the necessary wood and coal can be founded. In the meantime I've succeeded in persuading papa to a kind of truce. It wasn't easy and it might have been impossible had not this morning's mail brought the news of

his definitive appointment as manager of the theatre at Strassburg.

Walburga. [*Joyously.*] Oh, mama, mama! That is a ray of sunshine, isn't it?

Mrs. John. [*Sits up with a start.*] Bruno!

Mrs. Hassenreuter. [*Apologising.*] Oh, we've wakened you, Mrs. John.

Mrs. John. Is Bruno gone?

Mrs. Hassenreuter. Who? Who's Bruno?

Mrs. John. Why, Bruno! Don' you know Bruno?

Mrs. Hassenreuter. Ah, yes, yes! That's the name of your brother.

Mrs. John. Was I asleep?

Spitta. Fast asleep. But you cried out aloud in your sleep just now.

Mrs. John. Did you see, Mr. Spitta, how them boys out in the yard threw stones at my little Adelbert's wee grave? But I got after 'em, eh? An' they wasn't no bad slaps neither what I dealt out.

Mrs. Hassenreuter. It seems that you've been dreaming of your first little boy who died, Mrs. John.

Mrs. John. No, no; all that's fac'! I ain't been dreamin'. An' then I took little Adelbert an' I went with him to the registrar's office.

Mrs. Hassenreuter. But if your little boy's no longer alive . . . how could you . . .

Mrs. John. Aw, when a little child is onct born, it don't matter if it's dead . . . it's still right inside o' its mother. Did you hear that dawg howlin' behind the board fence? An' the moon had a big ring aroun' it! Bruno, you ain't doin' right!

Mrs. Hassenreuter. [*Shaking* Mrs. John.] Wake up, my good woman! Wake up, Mrs. John! You are ill! Your husband ought to take you to see a physician.

Mrs. John. Bruno, you ain' doin' right! [*The bells are ringing again.*] Ain't them the bells?

Mrs. Hassenreuter. The service is over, Mrs. John.

Mrs. John. [*Wholly awake now, stares about her.*] Why does I wake up? Why didn't you take an ax when I was asleep an' knock me over the head with it?—What did I say? Sh! Only don't tell a livin' soul a word, Mrs. Hassenreuter. [*She jumps up and arranges her hair by the help of many hairpins.* Manager Hassenreuter *appears in the doorway.*

Hassenreuter. [*Starting at the sight of his family.*]

"Behold, behold, Timotheus,
Here are the cranes of Ibicus!"

Didn't you tell me there was a shipping agent's office in the neighbourhood, Mrs. John—[*To* Walburga.] Ah, yes, my child! While, with the frivolousness of youth you have been thinking of your pleasure and nothing but your pleasure, your papa has been running about for three whole hours again purely on business.—[*To* Spitta.] You wouldn't be in such a hurry to establish a family, young man, if you had the least suspicion how hard it is—a struggle from day to day—to get even the wretched, mouldy necessary bit of daily bread for one's wife and child! I trust it will never be your fate to be suddenly hurled one day, quite penniless, into the underworld of Berlin and be obliged to struggle for a naked livelihood for yourself and those dear to you, breast to breast with others equally desperate, in subterranean holes and passages! But you may all congratulate me! A week from now we will be in Strassburg. [Mrs. Hassenreuter, Walburga *and* Spitta *all press his hand.*] Everything else will be adjusted.

Mrs. Hassenreuter. You have fought an heroic battle for us during these past years, papa. And you did it without stooping to anything unworthy.

Hassenreuter. It was a fight like that of drowning men who struggle for planks in the water. My noble costumes, made to body forth the dreams of poets, in what dens of vice, on what reeking bodies have they not passed their nights—*odi profanum vulgus*—only that a few pennies of rental might clatter in my cashbox! But let us turn to more cheerful thoughts. The freight waggon, alias the cart of Thespis, is at the door in order to effect the removal of our Penates to happier fields.—[*Suddenly turning to* Spitta.] My excellent Spitta, I demand your word of honour that, in your so-called despair, you two do not commit some irreparable folly. In return I promise to lend my ear to any utterances of yours characterised by a modicum of good sense.—Finally: I've come to you, Mrs. John, firstly because the officers bar all the exits and

will permit no one to go out; and secondly because I would like exceedingly to know why a man like myself, at the very moment when his triumphant flag is fluttering in the wind again, should have become the object of a malicious newspaper report!

Mrs. Hassenreuter. Dear Harro, Mrs. John doesn't understand you.

Hassenreuter. Aha! Then let us begin *ab ovo.* I have letters here [*he shows a bundle of them*] one, two, three, five—about a dozen! In these letters unknown but malicious individuals congratulate me upon an event which is said to have taken place in my storage loft. I would pay no attention to these communications were they not confirmed by a news item in the papers according to which a newborn infant is said to have been found in the loft of a costumer in the suburbs . . . a costumer, forsooth! I would have said nothing, I repeat, if this item had not perplexed me. Undoubtedly there is a case of mistaken identity involved here. In spite of that, I don't like to have the report stick to me. Especially since this cub of a reporter speaks of the costumer as being a bankrupt manager of barn stormers. Read it, mama: "The Stork Visits Costumer." I'll box that fellow's ears! This evening my appointment at Strassburg is to be made public in the papers and at the same time I am to be offered as a kind of comic dessert *urbi et orbi.* As if it were not obvious that of all curses that of being made ridiculous is the worst!

Mrs. John. You say there's policemen at the door downstairs, sir?

Hassenreuter. Yes, and their watch is so close that the funeral procession of Mrs. Knobbe's baby has been brought to a standstill. They won't even let the little coffin and the horrid fellow from the burial society who is carrying it go out to the carriage.

Mrs. John. What child's funeral was that?

Hassenreuter. Don't you know? It's the little son of Mrs. Knobbe which was brought up to me in so mysterious a way by two women and died almost under my very eyes, probably of exhaustion. *À propos . . .*

Mrs. John. The Knobbe woman's child is dead?

Hassenreuter. À propos, Mrs. John, I was going to say that you ought really to know how the affair of those two half-crazy women who got hold of the child finally ended?

Mrs. John. Well now, tell me, ain't it like the very finger o' God that they didn't take my little Adelbert an' that he didn't die?

Hassenreuter. Just why? I don't understand the logic of that. On the other hand, I have been asking myself whether the confused speeches of the Polish girl, the theft committed in my loft, and the milk bottle which Quaquaro brought down in a boot—whether all these things had not something to do with the notice in the papers.

Mrs. John. No, there ain't no connection between them things. Has you seen Paul, sir?

Hassenreuter. Paul? Ah yes; that's your husband. Yes, yes. Indeed I saw him in conversation with detective Puppe, who visited me too in connection with the theft.

[John *enters.*]

John. Well, Jette, wasn't I right? This here thing's happened soon enough!

Mrs. John. What's happened?

John. D'you want me to go an' earn the thousand crown's reward what's offered accordin' to placards on the news pillars by the chief o' police's office for denouncin' the criminal?

Mrs. John. How's that?

John. Don't you know that all this manœuverin' o' police an' detectives is started on account o' Bruno?

Mrs. John. How so? Where? What is it? What's been started?

John. The funeral's been stopped an' two o' the mourners—queer customers they is, too—has been taken prisoner. Yes, sir! That's the pass things has come to, Mrs. Hassenreuter. I'm a man, sir, what's tied to a woman as has a brother what's bein' pursued by the criminal police an' by detectives because he killed a woman not far from the river under a lilac bush.

Hassenreuter. But my dear Mr. John: God forbid that that be true!

Mrs. John. That's a lie! My brother don' do nothin' like that.

John. Aw, don' he though, Jette? Mr. Hassenreuter, I was sayin' the other day what kind of a brother that is! [*He no-*

tices the bunch of lilacs and takes it from the table.] Look at this here! That there monster's been in my home! If he comes back I'll be the first one that'll take him, bound hand an' foot, an' deliver him up to justice! [*He searches through the whole room.*]

Mrs. John. You c'n tell dam' fools there's such a thing as justice. There ain't no justice, not even in heaven. There wasn't a soul here. An' that bit o' lilac I brought along from Hangelsberg where a big bush of it grows behind your sister's house.

John. Jette, you wasn't at my sister's at all. Quaquaro jus' told me that! They proved that at headquarters. You was seen in the park by the river . . .

Mrs. John. Lies!

John. An' 'way out in the suburbs where you passed the night in a arbour!

Mrs. John. What? D'you come into your own house to tear everythin' into bits?

John. All right! I ain't sorry that things has come to this. There ain't no more secrets between us here. I foretold all that.

Hassenreuter. [*Tense with interest.*] Did that Polish girl who fought like a lioness for Mrs. Knobbe's baby the other day ever show herself again?

John. She's the very one. She's the one what they pulled out o' the water this morning. An' I has to say it without bitin' my tongue off: Bruno Mechelke took that girl's life.

Hassenreuter. [*Quickly.*] Then she was probably his mistress?

John. Ask mother! I don' know about that! That's what I was scared of; that's the reason I rather didn't come home at all no more, that my own wife was loaded down with a crowd like that an' didn't have the strength to shake it off.

Hassenreuter. Come, children.

John. Why so? You jus' stay!

Mrs. John. You don' has to go an' open the windows an' cry out everythin' for all the world to hear! It's bad enough if fate's brought a misfortune like that on us. Go on! Make a noise about it if you want to. But you won't see me very soon again.

Hassenreuter. And you mean to say that that . . .

John. That's jus' what I'll do! Jus' that! I'll call in anybody as wants to know —outa the street, offa the hall, the carpenter outa the yard, the boys an' the girls what takes their confirmation lessons—I'll call 'em all an' I'll tell 'em what a woman got into on account o' her fool love for her brother!

Hassenreuter. And so that good-looking girl who laid claim to the child is actually dead to-day?

John. Maybe she was good-lookin'. I don' know nothin' about that, whether she was pretty or ugly. But it's a fac' that she's lyin' in the morgue this day.

Mrs. John. I c'n tell you what she was! She was a common, low wench! She had dealin's with a Tyrolese feller that didn't want to have nothin' more to do with her an' she had a child by him. An' she'd ha' liked to kill that child while it was in her own womb. Then she came to fetch it with that Kielbacke what's been in prison eighteen months as a professional baby-killer. Whether she had any dealin's with Bruno, I don' know! Maybe so an' maybe not! An' anyhow, I don' see how it concerns me what Bruno's gone an' done.

Hassenreuter. So you *did* know the girl in question, Mrs. John?

Mrs. John. How so? I didn't know her a bit! I'm only sayin' what everybody as knows says about that there girl.

Hassenreuter. You're an honourable woman: you're an honourable man, Mr. John. This matter with your wayward brother is terrible enough as a fact, but it ought not seriously to undermine your married life. Stay honest and . . .

John. Not a bit of it! I don't stay with such people; not anywhere near 'em. [*He brings his fist down on the table, taps at the walls, stamps on the floor.*] Listen to the crackin'! Listen how the plasterin' comes rumblin' down behind the wallpaper! Everythin's rotten here, everythin's worm eaten! Everythin's undermined by varmint an' by rats an' by mice. [*He see-saws on a loose plank in the floor.*] Everythin' totters! Any minute the whole business might crash down into the cellar. —[*He opens the door.*] Selma! Selma! I'm goin' to pull outa here before the whole thing just falls together into a heap o' rubbish!

Mrs. John. What do you want o' Selma?

John. Selma is goin' to take that child

an' I'll go with 'em on the train an' take it out to my sister.

Mrs. John. You'll hear from me if you try that! Oh, you jus' try it!

John. Is my child to be brought up in surroundin's like this, an' maybe some day be driven over the roofs with Bruno an' maybe end in the penitentiary?

Mrs. John. [*Cries out at him.*] That ain't your child at all! Y'understan'?

John. 'S that so? Well, we'll see if an honest man can't be master o' his own child what's got a mother that's gone crazy an' is in the hands of a crowd of murderers. I'd like to see who's in the right there an' who's the stronger. Selma!

Mrs. John. I'll scream! I'll tear open the windows! Mrs. Hassenreuter, they wants to rob a mother o' her child! That's my right that I'm the mother o' my child! Ain't that my right? Ain't that so, Mrs. Hassenreuter? They're surroundin' me! They wants to rob me o' my rights! Ain't it goin' to belong to me what I picked up like refuse, what was lying on rags half-dead, an' I had to rub it an' knead it all I could before it began to breathe an' come to life slowly? If it wasn't for me, it would ha' been covered with earth these three weeks!

Hassenreuter. Mr. John, to play the part of an arbitrator between married people is not ordinarily my function. It's too thankless a task and one's experiences are, as a rule, too unhappy. But you should not permit your feeling of honour, justly wounded as, no doubt, it is, to hurry you into acts that are rash. For, after all, your wife is not responsible for her brother's act. Let her have the child! Don't increase the misery of it all by such hardness toward your wife as must hurt her most cruelly and unnecessarily.

Mrs. John. Paul, that child's like as if it was cut outa my own flesh! I bought that child with my blood. It ain't enough that all the world's after me an' wants to take it away from me; now you gotta join 'em an' do the same! That's the thanks a person gets! Why it's like a pack of hungry wolves aroun' me. You c'n kill me! But you can't touch my baby!

John. I comes home, Mr. Hassenreuter, only this mornin'. I comes home with all my tools on the train, jolly as c'n be. I broke off all my connections in Hamburg. Even if you don' earn so much, says I to myself, you'd rather be with your family, an' take up your child in your arms a little, or maybe take it on your knee a little! That was about the way I was thinkin'!

Mrs. John. Paul! Here, Paul! [*She goes close up to him.*] You c'n tear my heart out if you want to! [*She stares long at him, then runs behind the partition, whence her loud weeping is heard.*]

[Selma *enters from the hall. She is dressed in mourning garments and carries a little wreath in her hand.*]

Selma. What is I to do? You called me, Mr. John.

John. Put on your cloak, Selma. Ax your mother if you c'n go an' take a trip with me to Hangelsberg. You'll earn a bit o' money doin' it. All you gotta do is to take my child on your arm an' come along with me.

Selma. No, I ain' goin' to touch that child no more.

John. Why not?

Selma. No; I'm afraid, Mr. John! I'm that scared at the way mama an' the police lieutenant screamed at me.

Mrs. John. [*Appears.*] Why did they scream at you?

Selma. [*Crying vociferously.*] Officer Schierke even slapped my face.

Mrs. John. Well, I'll see about that . . . he oughta try that again.

Selma. I can't tell why that Polish girl took my little brother away. If I'd known that my little brother was goin' to die, I'd ha' jumped at her throat first. Now little Gundofried's coffin stands on the stairs. I believe mama has convulsions an' is lyin' down in Quaquaro's alcove. An' me they wants to take to the charity organisation, Mrs. John. [*She weeps.*]

Mrs. John. Then you c'n be reel happy. They can't treat you worse'n you was treated at home.

Selma. An' I gotta go to court! An' maybe they'll take me to gaol!

Mrs. John. On account o' what?

Selma. Because they says I took the child what the Polish girl had up in the loft an' carried it down to you.

Hassenreuter. So a child actually was born up there.

Selma. Certainly.

Hassenreuter. In *whose* loft?

Selma. Why, where them actors lives! It ain't none o' my business! How is I to know anythin' about it? All I c'n say is . . .

Mrs. John. You better hurry on about your business now, Selma! You got a clean conscience! You don' has to care for what people jabber.

Selma. An' I don' want to betray nothin' neither, Mrs. John.

John. [*Grasps* SELMA, *who is about to run away, and holds her fast.*] Naw, you ain't goin'! Here you stays! The truth! "I don' want to betray nothin'," you says. You heard that, too, Mrs. Hassenreuter? An' Mr. Spitta an' the young lady here heard it too. The truth! You ain't goin' to leave this here spot before I don' know the rights o' this matter about Bruno an' his mistress an' if you people did away with that child!

Mrs. John. Paul, I swear before God that I ain't done away with it!

John. Well . . . ? Out with what you know, girl! I been seein' for a long time that there's been some secret scheming between you an' my wife. There ain't no use no more in all that winkin' an noddin'. Is that child dead or alive?

Selma. No, that child is alive all right.

Hassenreuter. The one, you mean, that you carried down here under your apron or in some such way?

John. If it's dead you c'n be sure that you an' Bruno'll both be made a head shorter'n you are!

Selma. I'm tellin' you the child is alive.

Hassenreuter. But you said at first that you hadn't brought down any child at all.

John. An' you pretend to know nothin' o' that whole business, mother? [MRS. JOHN *stares at him;* SELMA *gazes helplessly and confusedly at* MRS. JOHN.] Mother, you got rid o' the child o' Bruno an' that Polish wench an' then, when people came after it, you went an' substitooted that little crittur o' Knobbe's.

Walburga. [*Very pale and conquering her repugnance.*] Tell me, Mrs. John, what happened on that day when I so foolishly took flight up into the loft at papa's coming? I'll explain that to you later, papa. On that occasion, as became clear to me later, I saw the Polish girl twice: first with Mrs. John and then with her brother.

Hassenreuter. You, Walburga?

Walburga. Yes, papa. Alice Rütterbusch was with you that day, and I had made an engagement to meet Erich here. He came to see you finally but failed to meet me because I kept hidden.

Hassenreuter. I can't say that I have any recollection of that.

Mrs. Hassenreuter. [*To her husband.*] The girl has really passed more than one sleepless night on account of this matter.

Hassenreuter. Well, Mrs. John, if you are inclined to attach any weight to the opinion of a former jurist who exchanged the law for an artistic career only after having been plucked in his bar examination—in that case let me assure you that, under the circumstances, ruthless frankness will prove your best defense.

John. Jette, where did you put that there child? The head detective told me—I jus' remember it now—that they're still huntin' aroun' for the child o' the dead woman! Jette, for God's sake, don't you have 'em suspect you o' layin' hands on that there newborn child jus' to get the proofs o' your brother's rascality outa the world!

Mrs. John. Me lay hands on little Adelbert, Paul?

John. Nobody ain't talkin' o' Adelbert here. [*To* SELMA.] I'll knock your head off for you if you don' tell me this minute what's become o' the child o' Bruno an' the Polish girl!

Selma. Why, it's behind your own partition, Mr. John!

John. Where is it, Jette?

Mrs. John. I ain't goin' to tell that.

[*The child begins to cry.*]

John. [*To* SELMA.] The truth! Or I'll turn you over to the police, y'understan'? See this rope? I'll tie you hand and foot!

Selma. [*Involuntarily, in the extremity of her fear.*] It's cryin' now! You know that child well enough, Mr. John.

John. Me?

[*Utterly at sea he looks first at* SELMA, *then at* HASSENREUTER. *Suddenly a suspicion flashes upon him as he turns his gaze upon his wife. He believes that he is beginning to understand and wavers.*]

Mrs. John. Don't you let a low down lie like that take you in, Paul! It'll all invented by the fine mother that girl has outa spite! Paul, why d'you look at me so?

Selma. That's low of you, mother John, that you wants to make me out so bad now. Then I won't be careful neither not to let nothin' out! You know all right that I carried the young lady's child down here an' put it in the nice, clean bed. I c'n swear to that! I c'n take my oath on that!

Mrs. John. Lies! Lies! You says that my child ain't my child!

Selma. Why, you ain't had no child at all, Mrs. John!

Mrs. John. [*Embraces her husband's knees.*] Oh, that ain't true at all!

John. You leave me alone, Henrietta! Don' dirty me with your hands!

Mrs. John. Paul, I couldn't do no different. I had to do that. I was deceived myself an' then I told you about it in my letter to Hamburg an' then you was so happy an' I couldn't disappoint you an' I thought: it's gota be! We c'n has a child this way too an' then . . .

John. [*With ominous calmness.*] Lemme think it over, Jette. [*He goes to the chest of drawers, opens a drawer and flings the baby linen and baby dresses that he finds therein into the middle of the room.*] C'n anybody understan' how week after week, an' month after month, all day long an' half the nights she could ha' worked on this trash till her fingers was bloody?

Mrs. John. [*Gathers up the linen and the dresses in insane haste and hides them carefully in the table drawer and elsewhere.*] Paul, don' do that! You c'n do anythin' else! It's like tearin' the last rag offa my naked body!

John. [*Stops, grasps his forehead and sinks into a chair.*] If that's true, mother, I'll be too ashamed to show my face again. [*He seems to sink into himself, crosses his arms over his head and hides his face.*]

Hassenreuter. Mrs. John, how could you permit yourself to be forced into a course of so much error and deception? You've entangled yourself in the most frightful way! Come, children! Unhappily there is nothing more for us to do here.

John. [*Gets up.*] You might as well take me along with you, sir.

Mrs. John. Go on! Go on! I don' need you!

John. [*Turning to her, coldly.*] So you bargained for that there kid someway an' when its mother wanted it back you got Bruno to kill her?

Mrs. John. You ain't no husband o' mine! How could that be! You been bought by the police! You took money to give me up to my death! Go on, Paul, you ain't human even! You got poison in your eyes an' teeth like wolves'! Go on an' whistle so they'll come an' take me! Go on, I says! Now I see the kind o' man you is an' I'll despise you to the day o' judgment! [*She is about to run from the room when policeman* SCHIERKE *and* QUAQUARO *appear.*]

Schierke. Hold on! Nobody can't get outa this room.

John. Come right in, Emil! You c'n come in reel quiet, officer. Everythin's in order here an' all right.

Quaquaro. Don't get excited, Paul! This here don' concern you!

John. [*With rising rage.*] Did you laugh, Emil?

Quaquaro. Man alive, why should I? Only Mr. Schierke is to take that there little one to the orphan house in a cab.

Schierke. Yessir! That's right. Where is the child?

John. How is I to know where all the brats offa junk heaps that witches use in their doin's gets to in the end? Watch the chimney! Maybe it flew outa there on a broomstick.

Mrs. John. Paul!—Now it *ain't* to live! No, outa spite! Now it don' *has* to live! Now its gotta go down under the ground with me!

[*With lightning-like rapidity she has run behind the partition and reappears at once with the child and makes for the door.* HASSENREUTER *and* SPITTA *throw themselves in front of the desperate woman, intent on saving the child.*]

Hassenreuter. Stop! I'll interfere now! I have the right to do so at this point! Whomever the little boy may belong to—so much the worse if its mother has been murdered—it was born on my premises! Forward, Spitta! Fight for it, my boy!

Here your propensities come properly into play! Go on! Careful! That's it! Bravo! Be as careful as though it were the Christ child! Bravo! That's it! You yourself are at liberty, Mrs. John. We don't restrain you. You must only leave us the little boy.

[MRS. JOHN *rushes madly out.*]

Schierke. Here you stays!

Mrs. Hassenreuter. The woman is desperate. Stop her! Hold her!

John. [*With a sudden change.*] Look out for mother! Mother! Stop her! Catch hold o' her! Mother! Mother!

[SELMA, SCHIERKE *and* JOHN *hurry after* MRS. JOHN. SPITTA, HASSENREUTER, MRS. HASSENREUTER *and* WALBURGA *busy themselves about the child, which lies on the table.*]

Hassenreuter. [*Carefully wrapping the infant.*] The horrible woman may be desperate for all I care! But for that reason she needn't destroy the child.

Mrs. Hassenreuter. But, dearest papa, isn't it quite evident that the woman has pinned her love, silly to the point of madness as it is, to this very infant? Thoughtless and harsh words may actually drive the unhappy creature to her death.

Hassenreuter. I used no harsh words, mama.

Spitta. An unmistakable feeling assures me that the child has only now lost its mother.

Quaquaro. That's true. It's father ain't aroun' an' don' want to have nothin' to do with it. He got married yesterday to the widow of a man who owned a merry-go-roun'! Its mother was no better'n she should be! An' if Mrs. Kielbacke was to take care of it, it'd die like ten outa every dozen what she boards. The way things has come aroun' now—it'll have to die too.

Hassenreuter. Unless our Father above who sees all things has differently determined.

Quaquaro. D'you mean Paul, the mason? Not now! No sir! I knows him! He's a ticklish customer where his honour is concerned.

Mrs. Hassenreuter. Just look how the child lies there! It's incomprehensible! Fine linen—even lace! Neat and sweet as a doll! It makes one's heart ache to think how suddenly it has become an utterly forlorn and forsaken orphan.

Spitta. Were I judge in Israel . . .

Hassenreuter. You would erect a monument to Mrs. John! It may well be that many an element of the heroic, much that is hiddenly meritorious, lurks in these obscure fates and struggles. But not even Kohlhaas of Kohlhaasenbrück with his mad passion for justice could fight his way through! Let us use practical Christianity! Perhaps we could permanently befriend the child.

Quaquaro. You better keep your hands offa that!

Hassenreuter. Why?

Quaquaro. Unless you're crazy to get rid o' money an' are anxious for all the worries an' the troubles you'll have with the public charities an' the police an' the courts.

Hassenreuter. For such things I have no time to spare, I confess.

Spitta. Won't you admit that a genuinely tragic fatality has been active here?

Hassenreuter. Tragedy is not confined to any class of society. I always told you that!

[SELMA, *breathless, opens the outer door.*]

Selma. Mr. John! Mr. John! Oh, Mr. John!

Mrs. Hassenreuter. Mr. John isn't here. What do you want, Selma?

Selma. Mr. John, you're to come out on the street!

Hassenreuter. Quiet, quiet now! What is the matter?

Selma. [*Breathlessly*]. Your wife . . . your wife . . . The whole street's crowded . . . 'buses an' tramcars . . . nobody can't get through . . . her arms is stretched out . . . your wife's lyin' on her face down there.

Mrs. Hassenreuter. Why, what has happened?

Selma. Lord! Lord God in Heaven! Mrs. John has killed herself.

THE END

THE CORAL

(DIE KORALLE)

By GEORG KAISER

Translated from the German by WINIFRED KATZIN

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The following three plays constitute the complete trilogy, entitled Gas, *and are reprinted by permission of and special arrangement with the German publishers*

GEORG KAISER AND "EXPRESSIONISM"

Georg Kaiser, the author of *The Coral, Gas I,* and *Gas II,* was born in Magdeburg in 1878, the son of a merchant. After some years spent in business, he turned to the theatre. He wrote his first play, *Rector Kleist,* when he was twenty-five years old, and since that time has devoted himself entirely to playwriting. Up to the present his plays number about thirty, among the most important of which are the trilogy included in this volume, and *From Morn to Midnight* (*Von Morgen bis Mitternachts*), *Hell, Way, Earth* (*Hölle, Weg, Erde*), and *The Fire in the Opera House* (*Der Brand im Opernhaus*). Although a strikingly original playwright, he has evidently been strongly influenced by Strindberg, Wedekind, Sternheim, and even by Shaw. As the Russian dramatist Andreyev confessed that he worked under "the sign of Schopenhauer," so Kaiser "names Schopenhauer, Dostoievsky, Nietsche, Holderlin, and Plato as his spiritual fathers." Since Kaiser is in general an expressionist, and *The Coral, Gas I,* and *Gas II* are expressionistic, a description of the materials and methods of expressionism may at the same time both characterize the dramatist and throw light upon these particular plays.

Expressionism is difficult to define or even describe, since it employs so wide a variety of both subject-matter and treatment and is so inconsistent in its practices. Commonly supposed to have originated in Germany within the past decade or two, it really was consciously employed by Strindberg, and some of its phases have appeared sporadically in the work of various dramatists for generations past. As a dominant method, however, it has arisen largely since the World War and has flourished principally in Germany, where it has been practiced with more or less success by such dramatists as Kaiser, Hasenclever, Kokoscha, and Toller, of whom Kaiser is the chief.

Expressionism, as now practiced, has its roots in the unsettled conditions of the past fifteen years. It represents no organized movement and thus far has crystallized into no definite creed. But certain of its general characteristics are plain enough. It starts by taking its raw material from real life (no matter how far it may afterwards transcend this limit), but it aims to distill the very essence of reality and to present it in terms of the universal. Naturally, then, it is chiefly concerned not with phenomena but with ideas and the springs of conduct. Since it pursues its idea or its passions from the real world into the transcendental, it may place its action on more than one plane of consciousness, —reality passing into dream, finite into infinite, consciousness into subconsciousness, as may be demanded by the varying phases of its dominant idea or the successive moods of its characters. Hence it may start with something resembling realism and finally pass into the wildest phantasmagoria, even within the limits of a single action. The background of the action is usually symbolic of the states of mind of the characters (and this forms the basis of expressionism in scenic design), and often the entire action itself is only one elaborate symbol. Significantly, the action is usually presented in brief scenes, which are connected only by the fact that all present successive emotional reactions or various phases of the idea. The characters are mere types, and usually bear only type names, such as The Man, The Woman, The Doctor, The Policeman, The Billionaire. Each is dominated by some one idea or passion, to such an extent that he seems, in an extreme case, scarcely even a type, hardly more than a personified abstraction. The speech is often in staccato style, sometimes hurried and broken, and is often less significant than the action.

In general, expressionism seems an attempt, not always successful, to penetrate to the inner and universal reality. The expressionist is in his technique reckless, daring, unconventional—and utterly inconsistent in his practice. Whether or not expressionism is a passing phase, it is undoubtedly significant of the times and it has enlarged the resources of dramaturgy. Its influence has been felt in America, notably in the work of Eugene O'Neill.

The Coral was first produced in 1917; *Gas,* part I, in 1918; and *Gas,* part II, in 1920; all at the Neues Theater, in Frankfort, Germany. *Gas,* part I, was produced in English, by the Birmingham Repertory Theatre, at Birmingham, England, in 1923, and at the Goodman Memorial Theatre, Chicago, in 1926.

CHARACTERS

The Billionaire
The Son
The Daughter
The Secretary
The Young Woman in Taffeta
The Man in Blue
The Lady in Black
The Daughter of the Lady in Black
The Gentleman in Gray
First Servant
Second Servant
The Singer
The Doctor
The Museum Director
The Captain
First Judge
Second Judge
A Guard
A Priest

The action takes place at the present day in an industrialized country not definitely located

THE CORAL

ACT ONE

An oval room, "The warm heart of the earth." Pale wall-panels in which the doors are invisible, two rear, one left. Only two round armchairs of white elephant-leather, centre, opposite and far apart. On the outer wing of the chair, right a signal apparatus.

In this chair sits the SECRETARY. *An indefinable shy energy in the profile. Reddish stubble of hair in narrow streaks from head to chin. The frame, in its suit of the roughest material, small, yet derives weight and importance from a certain ever-ready initiative, with effort suppressed. In the other chair the* YOUNG WOMAN IN TAFFETA.

Secretary. Would you mind . . .

The Young Woman in Taffeta. Oh, I understand you—will I be brief. I am not the only one waiting to be heard. The ante-room is crowded with others—and perhaps their cases are better justified. Who can tell? The wretched are in all the earth's corners. Whether the corner my fate thought fit to set me down in is an extra windy one . . .

Secretary. I should have to know what your fate has been before I could judge of that.

Young Woman in Taffeta. Hell, sir. Yes, hell. I do not exaggerate; that is not my way. Or might I describe it better by . . . one is human, sir, one has a mother . . . believes in God . . . yes, one is still capable of that, in spite of everything. And I can't speak the words out loud, but I . . . buy my bread with my body.

Secretary. Do you wish to be admitted into a home?

Young Woman in Taffeta. With flowers shining on the window ledges!

Secretary [*Takes a notebook out of his pocket and writes*]. You have two years' time in which to consider the foundations of a new life.

Young Woman in Taffeta. Two . . .

Secretary. The doors of every home for women who have strayed stand open to you today.

Young Woman in Taffeta [*Taking his hand and kissing it—hysterically*]. I never sold my childhood faith. I never held God up for sale. Now he seeks me out with his messenger . . . my God's messenger . . . you are he. Take my burning thanks; I offer it on my knees. More than that . . . more than that, it is God himself who goes amongst us again. We are all saved . . . hallelujah, amen!

[*The* SECRETARY *presses a button on the signal board. Immediately two servants enter left, herculean figures in yellow livery. They raise the* YOUNG WOMAN IN TAFFETA *and lead her through the door, rear.*]

Young Woman in Taffeta [*Ecstatically*]. A home for the fallen—I shall become another woman there . . . another . . .

[*She and the servants go. The servants admit the* MAN IN BLUE *and lead him to the chair, then go.*]

Secretary. Would you mind . . .

Man in Blue [*Speaking with difficulty*]. My chest . . .

Secretary. Do you wish to be admitted to a sanatorium?

Man in Blue [*Burying his face in his hands*]. They've turned me out now that I have worked my strength away for them. Am I an old man? No. I'm in the prime of life, but I look aged, aged. My clothes flap on my bones—once I filled them out to the very seams. The System has been the ruin of me.

Secretary. Are you a laborer?

Man in Blue. The System ruins everyone with its inhuman using up of all a man's capacity. And always a crowd waiting, so that one's got to be used up quick to make room for the next one.

Secretary. Can you find no employment in any factory?

Man in Blue. They don't even let me through the gates any more. I've been walking the streets for a fortnight now, and I have eaten my last penny away. Now . . .

Secretary. We have settlements on the land.

Man in Blue. We have—I know. They are far off and I can't get there on foot.

Secretary. They lie on the train line.

Man in Blue. I . . . haven't the price of a ticket.

Secretary [*Pulls out his notebook and writes. Hands the slip of paper across*]. Show this note outside.

Man in Blue [*Reads—stands up*]. That is more than the train fare. [*Stammering.*] I have a wife and children. I can take them with me—and I had meant to leave them!

[*The* SECRETARY *presses a button on the signal-board. The two servants come.*]

Man in Blue [*Already hastening out, left*]. My wife . . . my children! [*Goes.*]

[*The servants shut the door behind him, then open it again and admit the* LADY IN BLACK *and her daughter. The* DAUGHTER *carries a violin case.*]

Lady in Black [*To the servants*]. Thank you—I prefer to stand. [*Servants go.*]

Secretary [*Standing up*]. Would you mind . . .

Lady in Black [*Calmly*]. I decided to take this step for my daughter's sake. I lost my husband a few months ago. He left me almost nothing. For myself I have been able to find a situation which will keep me, but I know that I should never earn enough for my daughter's musical training. I have reason to believe that her talent is great enough to ensure her future. I purposely brought no testimonials to that effect. The best witness to her capability is her playing. Will you hear her?

Secretary. I believe your daughter also will find that more enjoyable when her training is completed.

Lady in Black. Am I to assume from that, that . . . [*The* SECRETARY *writes. To her daughter*]. Kiss his hand.

Secretary [*Gives the sheet to the* LADY IN BLACK]. Collect this monthly until the end of her studies.

Lady in Black [*Without reading it*]. Thanks must weary you, you hear them so often. People must seem pitiable to you, you make so many of them happy. As for us, we can but marvel at the miracle that there can exist someone who does not shut himself away from us when we come to him with our troubles. To hear us all is an act of greater courage than the fulfillment of our requests is an act of unspeakable goodness.

[*The* SECRETARY *presses a button on the signal-board. The servants come and lead the* LADY IN BLACK *and her daughter away. A signal buzzes. Immediately the* SECRETARY *presses another button. One of the servants appears, left.*]

Secretary. Wait. [*Servant goes.*]

[*Through the righthand door in the rear which, as it opens, is seen to be heavily padded, the* BILLIONAIRE *hastens in. The detailed description of the* SECRETARY *above aimed at the description of the* BILLIONAIRE, *for the* SECRETARY *is merely his double, identical to a hair. Even in speech and gesture the likeness is complete.*]

Billionaire. The sailing-list of the 'Freedom of the Seas.' Received after departure yesterday and reported this morning by radio. My son does not appear among the passengers.

Secretary. Only his companion.

Billionaire. The list is incomplete.

Secretary. They are usually perfectly accurate.

Billionaire. Where is my son if his companion is on that steamer? He must have booked on her. It was my wish. The papers published the names of every first-class passenger, and my son's was the first.

Secretary. I don't believe there is any error.

Billionaire. He must be on board. There is no other ship he could possibly be on. I sent express instructions to his companion that they were to come on her; she is the fastest of all steamers. The report is wrong. Get in touch with the shipping-office. Ask the source of the error. Whether on board—or in the drawing-up of the list. [SECRETARY *hesitates*]. Wait at the telephone for an answer.

Secretary. It will keep me . . .

Billionaire. From what?

Secretary. Today is open Thursday.

Billionaire [*Thoughtfully*]. Open Thursday. [*The* SECRETARY *waits*]. Go and inquire. I'll stay here meanwhile. [SECRETARY *gives him the notebook*]. Say the matter is exceedingly urgent and report at once. [SECRETARY *leaves through door left.* BILLIONAIRE *sits down in chair, presses button. Servants admit the* GENTLEMAN IN GRAY, *powerful frame, in ample light-gray suit, the pockets stuffed with newspapers and pamphlets, round red head, shorn. Sandals.*]

Gentleman in Gray [*Following the servants, who indicate the chair—fanning himself with his cap*]. Take it slow. Wait a minute.

Breathe deep. [*Servants wait*]. Better keep 'em calm out there—this is going to take some time. [*To the* BILLIONAIRE]. It won't be denied either. I shall have your attention riveted with the first three words. [*To the servants*]. I'm no wild beast. [*At a sign from the* BILLIONAIRE, *servants off.*]

Billionaire. Would you . . .

Gentleman in Gray [*Looking about him*]. So this is the room all the hymns are about—fountain of great compassion—holy of holies whence love and assistance flow . . . [*With descriptive gestures*]. Sweeping circle—significant form—glowing heart of the earth.

Billionaire. Say what you have to say . . .

Gentleman in Gray. Impressive bareness—two chairs—lots of room for plaints and lamentations. Extraordinary the paneling hasn't turned dark yet under the cries of distress dashing against it. [BILLIONAIRE *moves his hand towards the signal-board.* GENTLEMAN *notices the movement*]. Don't ring for the servants. I know this open Thursday is precious for all who wait. Each wasted moment and some human fate is determined.

Billionaire. In what connection do you seek my help?

Gentleman in Gray. I . . . [*leaning forward*] want to help you. [BILLIONAIRE *makes another involuntary movement towards the wall*]. No need. I'm sane, quite. I thought this over a long time. I've studied the material—worked over it—and come to the result—and the solution is of absurd simplicity. The whole struggle—this gigantic fight which is waged at present with enormous disposal of means and counter-means—collapses, flows away, is gone.

Billionaire. What struggle do you mean?

Gentleman in Gray. The only one which rages eternally—between poor and rich.

Billionaire. That . . .

Gentleman in Gray. I can settle.

Billionaire. [*With a searching look that flashes interest*]. What made you come to me?

Gentleman in Gray. You're surprised. But I had to hold your attention in the first moment or all was lost. The servants wouldn't have let me through a second time. No trifling with those two. [*Bringing out his papers with violence*]. I now proceed to develop what I briefly mentioned before. This is material—exhaustive assurances. Socialist newspapers, magazines, pamphlets, the entire arsenal of the fighting proletariat. Appeals, estimates of means for stirring up success—tariffs, statistics, tables of figures, flood of literature. Literature—nothing else. And brings nobody a single step further, the rift gapes wider every day. For it is built upon enmity to the knife. [*Pushing it all back into his pockets*]. Pity for their pains. Useless wandering in blind alleys. To no purpose. Do you follow me?

Billionaire. I don't understand.

Gentleman in Gray. What are you doing here? Giving with both hands. Whoever asks, gets. Much or little, whatever they want. Your billions make it possible. You declare your open Thursday. All come and receive. Wretchedness creeps over this threshold cowering, and dances out joy. The mouths of the oppressed hail paradise in this oval room—here beats the heart of the earth—glowing, merciful. Not for a moment does it miss a beat—but spends and spends. Why do you do it?

Billionaire. My millions . . .

Gentleman in Gray. No.

Billionaire. What then?

Gentleman in Gray. Your wealth revolts you. [BILLIONAIRE *raises one hand*]. You're not aware of it yourself, but for me there can be no other reason I do assure you. I didn't come upon it overnight. I've run around too in all the wearisome blind-alleys until I found the open road that alone leads to the goal.

Billionaire. What goal?

Gentleman in Gray. The end of the fight, the struggle between rich and poor. A thing that no party, no parole, can bring to pass, that you can make real with a single stroke of your pen. And thereby render all the rest superfluous,—this glowing heart of the earth of yours, your open Thursday, the assemblage of misery in your anteroom. For they are all mere drops you pour into the sea of distress. Take it from me,—I know. But by the pen-stroke I refer to, you can proclaim eternal peace on earth. Sign this declaration.

Billionaire. [*Without taking the document*]. What declaration do you want of me?

Gentleman in Gray. That you regard the enrichment of individuals as the most monstrous of evils.

Billionaire. That I . . .

Gentleman in Gray. You must. It must come from you, the billionaire of billionaires. Coming from you it will have importance, weight. Like a lightning flash it will illuminate the battlefields where the opposing forces now

stand confronting each other armed to the teeth. The white flag of peacable discussion, that is what we will run up—understanding. War will then become superfluous, the cause itself annulled. You did not desire riches—circumstances forced you. But there is a way to alter that condition, and a solution will be found and sought for in a spirit of brotherhood.

Billionaire. I hardly think . . .

Gentleman in Gray. You alone, you alone can do it. You make these gifts because you have to. An inner force compels it. But it was all in little until I came to show you the greater thing—and now you will sign with joy. [*The* BILLIONAIRE *stands up*]. Surely you do not mean to call your servants?

Billionaire. I . . . [*Stands behind the chair thinking*].

Gentleman in Gray. I knew you would.

Billionaire. I am going to explain to you.

Gentleman in Gray. Your signature.

Billionaire [*Again repudiating*]. Then you shall say whether I am able to sign that paper or not.

Gentleman in Gray. You must.

Billionaire [*Returning to his seat*]. Since it appears to be your wish to turn the whole order of things upside down, I must try to construct for you my world as it appears to me. Do you know anything of my beginnings?

Gentleman in Gray. Yes, your own powers.

Billionaire. My own weaknesses.

[GENTLEMAN IN GRAY *looks at him disconcerted.*]

Billionaire. Or let us say—fear . . . dread. Weakness and fear, then. But you will not grasp this in the space of a word or two. My career—as they say—is told in every school book. So it is a well known story which I am about to repeat. The data will be the same, only I shall lend them a different significance. My father was an employee in the factory which now belongs to me. Whether he kept the furnace going under a cauldron or carried loads from place to place, I don't know. At any rate, he did not earn much, for we lived in wretched circumstances. One Monday—it was payday—he failed to come home. He had been given notice to quit, for he was used up—and he had taken his last money and gone off with it. He could never have provided for us any longer. On that night my mother took her own life. Somewhere in the house I heard a scream . . . I didn't run to see what it was, I knew already—I was eight years old. In that moment I knew what horror was, and it took root in me. It stood before me like a gray wall that I must climb over to escape the horror that pursued me. The horror made up of my father's staying off with his wages and my mother's scream set me on my way—drove me to flight. It stood at my back as I worked—I found employment in the same factory. It never left me even for a second—and I fled and fled before it—and flee still, for it stands behind me somewhere now as then.

Gentleman in Gray. You made a bewilderingly rapid rise.

Billionaire. Tireless diligence, tireless industry, tireless flight, nothing else. I must keep the distance ever wider between the horror and myself. It drove me on. No hope of quarter, that much I have learned. It goaded me forward. The mind becomes ingenious against a dread that freezes up the limbs. There stood the machines which had sucked my father dry, hung my mother by the neck from a hook on a door, they would crush and maim me too unless I became their master first. The factory, with its machines—with its people set between me and the horror—that was the first I ever knew of rest.

Gentleman in Gray [*Brushing his hand across his forehead*]. But after all . . . such an experience occurs a hundred times a day . . . the father disappears, the mother . . .

Billionaire. It struck me down because I was particularly weakly. I must have been, or I should have withstood it better. Instead, I ran away as hard as I could go. Have I said enough?

Gentleman in Gray [*Staggered*]. I protest . .

Billionaire. Against the weakling before you?

Gentleman in Gray. Then you have no mercy on your fellow men . . .

Billionaire. No fugitive may see whom he tramples underfoot.

Gentleman in Gray [*Joyfully and with a searching regard*]. Nevertheless—'The warm heart of the earth'.

Billionaire. Certainly. I refuse to be brought in touch with poverty—it is too powerful a reminder. I instituted the Open Thursday, therefore—I know then when to hide myself.

Gentleman in Gray. Yet you sit here and listen to it all.

Billionaire. Error. My Secretary sits here.

Gentleman in Gray [*After a pause—sharply*]. Is that your cosmic plan?

Billionaire. Not mine—it is *the* cosmic plan.

Gentleman in Gray. That each class is one of the stages of escape?

Billionaire. All are fugitives.

Gentleman in Gray. And the fleetest . . . the . . .

Billionaire. Utterest cowards . . . yes . . .

Gentleman in Gray. Triumph . . .

Billionaire. My sort.

Gentleman in Gray [*Groaning, then with irony*]. Then I must rest my hope in a humanity without cowards.

Billionaire. Some will always be born more timid than the rest. The cause is of no consequence. It is a lever which sets itself in motion. Progress not whither but whence—your suspicions grow. Exactly. I express what you assume. And I am more familiar than you with this line of thought. Where do they come from, the great who inherit the world? They rise out of the dark because they were in the dark. And there experience the horror . . . this way or that . . . Blazing meteors that flare . . . and fall.

Gentleman in Gray [*Mocking*]. And when . . . are you due to fall? [*The* BILLIONAIRE *shakes his head, smiling*]. How have you insured yourself against the fate of meteors?

Billionaire. I have a son. [*The* SECRETARY *comes back.* BILLIONAIRE *rises, goes toward* SECRETARY]. Has the mistake been corrected?

The Secretary. The list was complete.

Billionaire. Without my son?

Secretary. He is not on the 'Freedom of the Seas.'

Billionaire. But his companion is.

Secretary. They must have separated.

Billionaire. And he with orders not to stir from his side. [*The* SECRETARY *is silent*]. I will have an explanation. At this moment I do not even know where my son is. Get into touch with his companion by radio. Let him report. Something must have happened. I do not understand how he can be traveling without my son.

Secretary. Your son is young.

Billionaire. Tender chains that . . . ? We shall soon know the reason. [SECRETARY *off again. The* BILLIONAIRE *comes back to his chair*]. Did my story affect you so deeply then?

Gentleman in Gray [*Had leapt up as the* SECRETARY *entered. He is still staring at the door through which he disappeared. Now he turns to the* BILLIONAIRE]. Do I see double? Is it you sitting here? Is it you who just went through that door? Is it yourself you were just speaking to?

Billionaire. No. I was arranging a piece of business with my secretary.

Gentleman in Gray. The *Secretary*—! are you brothers? But even then it would be . . .

Billionaire. But possible, as you observe.

Gentleman in Gray. [*Dropping into the chair*]. Horrible.

Billionaire. A common prank of Nature's. You'll find a repetition of each of us, if you try, of course. I had mine looked for—and I admit that fortune favored me.

Gentleman in Gray. Fortune—?

Billionaire. It serves many excellent purposes for me. I can be here and there without ever bestirring myself. Even at this Open Thursday I am present in my well-known person—and am perhaps on a fishing trip at some distant river.

Gentleman in Gray. Do you still know which one you are?

Billionaire. I imagine so.

Gentleman in Gray. But everybody else takes the Secretary for you?

Billionaire. Except the two servants who guard my personal Secretary.

Gentleman in Gray. Otherwise you are indistinguishable?

Billionaire. Except for a small and unobtrusive sign, a coral which the Secretary wears on his watch chain. The one of us who wears the coral is the Secretary.

Gentleman in Gray. And only the servants know?

Billionaire. They are detectives.

Gentleman in Gray. What if I should betray your secret?

Billionaire. Who would believe you? It would be one more legend about me.

Gentleman in Gray [*Shaking his head energetically*]. You've no coral on your watch-chain,—or—I didn't notice, were you wearing one before . . .

Billionaire. No. I've talked to you since you came in in my own person, and if you wish to hear the rest—

Gentleman in Gray [*Laughing*]. The end of your head-over-heels flight before the horror—or is there no end?

Billionaire. In my son. I have a daughter, but the stronger bond is with the son, of

course. Have you children? No. Then you must allow me to know. With a son one feels his continuation—one's own continuation—in his beginning. That is a law that runs in the blood. It is my most certain conviction that it is so. Every father wishes that his son shall have it better than he did.

Gentleman in Gray. And not know the horror, as you call it.

Billionaire. Need I say any more? It is all so obvious.

Gentleman in Gray. And have you protected him?

Billionaire. I let him live in brightness. He has no contact with those things that scream and wail from your pamphlets. I have led him along a bypath from all that.

Gentleman in Gray. Where do you keep him hidden?

Billionaire. I don't keep him hidden. The earth has so many sunny strands.

Gentleman in Gray. Where the horror may be dreamt away.

Billionaire. Where one can make oneself a happier past.

Gentleman in Gray. And have rest from flight, and blessed peacefulness.

Billionaire. In paradise.

Gentleman in Gray. You found your outward double—the Secretary.

Billionaire. Does that still excite you?

Gentleman in Gray. No, there's method in it.

Billionaire. How do you mean?

Gentleman in Gray. And now you're forming an inward double—your son.

Billionaire. It may be my passion to exchange.

Gentleman in Gray. With such reasons.

Billionaire. So fearsome.

Gentleman in Gray. So powerful.

Billionaire. Do you still want to help me? With your declaration that I am to sign?

Gentleman in Gray [*Pushing his newspapers, etc., still deeper into his pockets, breathing heavily*]. You've set me in a turmoil. The air's thick here. It presses the sweat out of one's paws.

Billionaire. Think it over at leisure.

Gentleman in Gray. It is too crazy—the 'Warm Heart of the Earth' . . . 'Open Thursday' . . . the results!

Billionaire. What results?

Gentleman in Gray. Chaos opens up.

Billionaire. It has already—therefore let whoever can, save himself on the first spot of firm ground he can find.

Gentleman in Gray [*Almost shouting*]. Not you!

Billionaire. I have a son.

Gentleman in Gray. Let me out of here. Buzz for your servants. I can't find the door. Buzz for them, I tell you. [*The* Billionaire *does so. The two Servants come. The* Gentleman in Gray *threateningly to the* Billionaire]. You've dashed my world to pieces—from under the ruins I curse you—I curse you. [*The Servants seize him roughly and take him out.*]

Secretary [*Coming in again*]. A radio from your son.

Billionaire. From land?

Secretary. No. From shipboard.

Billionaire. Is he on his way . . .

Secretary [*Reading*]. 'Just left . . .'

Billionaire. On the 'Freedom of the Seas', after all. [*The* Secretary *shakes his head*]. Can she have a sister-ship, then, as sumptuous?

Secretary. [*Goes on reading*]. 'On the Albatross.'

Billionaire. 'Albatross'? What sort of a ship is that?

Secretary. A coaler.

Billionaire. A . . . coaler? Does he explain? [Secretary *hesitates—hands him a telegraph.* Millionaire *reads it through*]. As stoker . . . [*Collapsing against the chair*]. What does it mean—my son . . . on a coaler . . . stoker . . . ?

ACT TWO

Under the awning on the deck of the Billionaire's *yacht. A section of the railing, rear. Heat mist over the calm sea.*

In white-enamelled wicker armchairs—Billionaire, *the* Daughter, *the* Museum-Director, *the* Doctor, *the* Captain, *all in white. A negro sets out iced drinks. Off, the* Singer's *voice.*

Singer. [*Lowering her voice on a long last note, comes in from the rear and trains her kodak on the group. Breaks off as she snaps*]. Thanks . . . [*The rest look up surprised*]. for the advertisement. On the high seas—aboard the most marvellous yacht in the world—and such an audience! We must have that on the record. Every opera-house on earth will compete for a contract with me. [*Dropping into*

a chair beside the BILLIONAIRE]. If *you* enjoyed hearing me—or am I mistaken? Tell me the truth—I have the picture, anyway.

Billionaire [*In some embarrassment*]. No, no, on the contrary, really extraordinary . . . [*The others clap applause.*]

Singer [*Quickly snapping again*]. Second photo—the applause. [*Handing the negro her glass*]. Hot lemonade.

Doctor. Just what I was going to suggest to you.

Singer. Ah, doctor, you don't know me—I'm everything, singer, impresario, and physician.

Museum Director. Then you are depriving two people of a livelihood.

Singer. Well, isn't that the secret of success?

Museum Director. You've good healthy nerves.

Singer. I've the most terrible nerves.

Doctor. Won't you explain that to me as a medical man?

Singer. I see ghosts.

Doctor. What sort of ghosts?

Singer. Just ghosts.

Doctor. That's more than I ever have.

Singer. Because you haven't an excitable temperament. Artists have—that's why they see ghosts.

Doctor. I see. Only artists, nobody else.

Singer. Let's ask round. It makes an entertaining game at sea. Each in turn now. [*To the* BILLIONAIRE]. Do you see ghosts?

Billionaire. I'm afraid we've no time just now to . . . [*To the* CAPTAIN]. Isn't the 'Albatross' about due to come within range now, Captain?

Captain. You can't quite calculate it with ships of that type.

Billionaire. Please. [*The* CAPTAIN *goes.*]

Doctor. What sort of a ship is this 'Albatross' really?

Billionaire. My son discovered it. It must have some very special points. Most likely a yacht belonging to some friend he met on his journey.

Daughter. We can challenge her to a race.

Singer. Thrilling! What a shame I've so few films with me.

Daughter. The loser to be rammed.

Doctor. Crew and all?

Daughter. Five minutes rescue time. [*To the* BILLIONAIRE]. Shall I go and tell the captain to prepare for the race?

Museum Director. Suppose the unknown 'Albatross' is too much for us?

Daughter. I shall stay on the bridge. I'll give the orders to the engineroom, and we'll pile on all the steam we can make.

Doctor. At this temperature.

Daughter. There'll be air up there.

Doctor. I was thinking of the engineroom.

Daughter [*Stamping*]. The upper deck is all I know about.

Billionaire. I don't think the 'Albatross' is faster than we—so the charm of the fight isn't there.

Daughter. What—my brother's chosen ship?

Billionaire. We'll leave the decision to him, then. He knows both sides. [*The* CAPTAIN *comes back*]. Sighted?

Captain. Not yet.

Billionaire [*To his daughter*]. You see, she's slow. [*To the others*]. Let's amuse ourselves meanwhile.

Singer. With the ghost game—good!

Billionaire [*Hastily, to the* MUSEUM DIRECTOR]. Is the Tintoretto really no good at all?

Museum Director. On the contrary—it is very fine, very fine indeed.

Billionaire. But you refused it when I offered it to you.

Museum Director [*Nods*]. Christ carrying the cross.

Singer. You object to the subject?

Museum Director. When I extend it to a matter of principle—yes.

Doctor. There'll be precious little place for old masters in your gallery in that case.

Singer [*To the* MUSEUM DIRECTOR]. Proceed with the lecture, won't you? I'll snap your audience as you arrive at the climax.

Museum Director. In the new museum I am to be the director of, my aim is to achieve a complete break with the past, however recent. I shall conduct my entire propaganda with this end in view.

Doctor. And what will you have left?

Singer. Empty walls.

Museum Director. Empty walls and practically nothing to cover them.

Doctor. Highly original museum.

Daughter. Indoor tennis-courts.

Museum Director. And that very circumstance will be a spur to new productions. Emphatically a beginning. Which means especially no more disapproving criticism based on comparisons with what has gone be-

fore. We are all sitting in that shadow—in one way or another it is a source of torment to us all. We must get into the full light of things again—and shake off these cross-carryings. At least that is how I see it. It is a burden on us—a cross that we are made to carry—this mass of the past from which we can only free ourselves by acts of violence—or even crimes, if it should come to that.

Doctor. And do you consider it possible then—without self-deceiving?

Museum Director. I don't know.

Doctor. I'm afraid the cross-carrying is inevitable.

Museum Director. One must truly desire the future.

Doctor. You might manage it in your gallery.

Museum Director. My ambition goes no further.

Doctor. But in real life I doubt very much whether anyone can jump beyond his shadow.

[*A sailor comes with a report for the* CAPTAIN, *and goes.*]

Captain [*Standing up. To the* BILLIONAIRE]. The 'Albatross' is close by on the starboard side.

Billionaire. [*Excited*]. Send the launch over. [CAPTAIN *goes.*]

Doctor. Now we shall know all about the mystery-ship.

Singer. And the matador.

Museum Director. My curiosity is at snapping-point.

Daughter. I'm going up to flash the challenge across.

Billionaire [*Holding her back. To the others*]. Please go ahead; we'll come in a moment. [SINGER, MUSEUM DIRECTOR, *and* DOCTOR *go*]. I want to talk to you a second first.

Daughter. Now?

Billionaire. It's only a question.

Daughter. What is it?

Billionaire. Could you consider—marrying the Museum Director?

Daughter. I—I don't know.

Billionaire. I want to urge you to decide, because . . .

Daughter. I hardly know him.

Billionaire. Nor I . . .

Daughter. Then how can you persuade me so?

Billionaire. I sat listening to him just now, and he impressed me as no other person ever did.

Daughter. Because he rejected your gift?

Billionaire. I like his ideas. That inner independence—his philosophy which admits only the future and annihilates the past . . .

Daughter. I wasn't listening to him.

Billionaire. You would give me great joy . .

Daughter. Then it's superfluous to ask me to think it over.

Billionaire [*Shakes her hands*]. Now let us go and meet your brother. [*They go.*]

[*Sound of bells and sirens. Sailors open the railing rear and let down the companion. Everybody comes back and leans over the railing. Handkerchiefs wave. Helloes.*]

Doctor [*Coming under the awning*]. It's a clumsy old tub.

Museum Director. [*Following him*]. Does credit to the name of 'Albatross'.

Doctor. Could you see any other passengers aboard?

Museum Director. That may have been the charm of the voyage.

Doctor. Thanks, not for me!

Singer [*Joins them, holding camera behind her back*]. Discretion—family reunion!

[*The* SON, *in a gray suit, comes up the stairway, and the daughter falls upon him with a storm of welcome. The* CAPTAIN *stands by at the salute.*]

Son. Have you been lying in wait for me?

Daughter. Up and down this spot for three days. Glorious bore.

Billionaire. I planned a surprise for you.

Son. Well, you've succeeded brilliantly. Your guests?

Billionaire. A few intimates, that's all.

[*The* SON *goes from one to the other and shakes hands in silence. Then he stands beside a chair, still without a word. The awkward silence continues.*]

Daughter [*Flinging herself into a chair*]. Bit too solemn for me.

Billionaire [*Indicating the chairs*]. Please. [*Everybody sits down, the* SON *last and hesitatingly. The* CAPTAIN *comes back and sits down too.*]

Son [*To him, astonished*]. Aren't we going on?

Billionaire. I thought we might stay at sea another three or four days.

Son. Certainly, if you wished . . .

Billionaire. On your account.

Son. What for?

Billionaire. After your travels . . .

Daughter. I say, I quite forgot to look at the 'Albatross' in all the excitement. Is she very swell? How many knots? [*The* MUSEUM DIRECTOR *and the* DOCTOR *laugh.*]

Son. What's the matter with the 'Albatross'?

Daughter. We wanted to challenge her. Should we have had a good opponent?

Son. You're laughing at her. No, sister, the 'Albatross' isn't an opponent at all in the way you mean.

Daughter [*Surprised*]. Then why didn't you come on the 'Freedom of the Seas'?

Billionaire [*Uneasily, trying to change the subject*]. Well, what about your impressions of the world's great cities?

Singer. Did you visit the opera everywhere?

Son. We may as well define the 'Albatross's' class—she's a coaler. You must know all the ships on these roads, Captain?

Captain. I'm afraid the 'Albatross' had escaped me.

Son. Why? [*The* CAPTAIN *smiles. To the others*]. Why should it have? Don't other people travel on such ships?

Captain. They are not arranged for passengers.

Son. No, not for passengers. But what about the sailors. Aren't stokers people?

Musical Director [*After a pause*]. You understand the refinements of pleasure.

Son. What pleasure?

Museum Director. It is the antithesis between the coaler and this yacht that enables you to savour its luxury as never before.

Son. Or else to—[*Breaking off, and turning to the* BILLIONAIRE]. Did you have a report from my companion?

Billionaire. I did not speak to him.

Son. But he must have got back two days ago.

Billionaire. I've been lying out here for two days.

Son. Are you displeased with him? I take all the blame. He did all he could to prevent it.

Billionaire [*Avoiding the subject*]. Won't you change your clothes?

Daughter. That's a city suit you have on.

Son. It's a better protection against the coal-dust whirling about. And besides it was less noticeable—it's wiser to be part of the picture.

Billionaire. Do so then—go and get into white from head to foot like us.

Son. Please let me enjoy myself my own way.

Singer [*Busy with the camera*]. Most interesting pictorial effect.

Son. Is that the only way it strikes you?

Doctor. In this extreme heat white clothing is a matter of health.

Billionaire. There spoke our careful doctor—obey him.

Son [*With repressed sharpness*]. Would you expect your professional advice to be followed in the engineroom too?

Doctor. Scarcely.

Son. Because you don't enforce it there. Because of the black coal they work with.

Doctor. Exactly.

Son. Therefore health down there must suffer, while up here it must be taken care of?

Museum Director. You seem to have seen more things on your tour than you . . .

Son. When it is the first trip, one keeps one's eyes wide open.

Daughter. Did you meet any princes?

Singer. Tell us all about it.

Son. Every day.

Daughter. Have you made any friends? Is anyone coming to visit you soon?

Son. I could introduce five—ten—to you off my coaler. Come with me next time.

Museum Director. Is this another . . .

Son. Refinement of pleasure?

[*A sailor comes with a report to the* CAPTAIN. *The* CAPTAIN *goes to the* DOCTOR *and whispers to him. They go.*]

Son. Aren't we going on now?

Billionaire. I have given no orders.

Son. What did the doctor go off with the captain for?

Singer. One of the crew's had an accident, I expect.

Son. Wouldn't you like to take a snapshot of it?

Daughter. We might as well start moving—it would be one way of getting some air. This heat is really becoming unbearable.

Son. And we're on deck.

Singer. Is it cooler anywhere else?

Son. No—hotter.

Singer. Not possible!

Son. Go below into the stoke-hole.

Billionaire. Let's start going.

Museum Director [*ironically*]. Mind the stokers.

Son. Do you know what it means to be by those furnaces?

Museum Director. I have never sought the opportunity to try it.

Son. And a description would hardly interest you.

Museum Director. Oh, graphically done by an expert . . .

Son. I am an expert!

Billionaire [*to the* DAUGHTER]. Please go and tell the captain . . .

Daughter. Full steam ahead!

Singer. The ladies take over the command.

Daughter. Here's where we make a new record. We'll radio it to the papers tonight and tomorrow the whole world will burst with envy. [*Goes off.*]

Son. Won't you stop that wickedness?

Billionaire. The yacht has never shown her full capacity yet.

Son. Then I must ask you to drop me first.

Museum Director. The coaler has unaccustomed you to speed.

Son. No, to frivolity, perhaps.

Billionaire. You used to enjoy that sort of sport.

Son. I am ashamed to have come to a right mind so late.

Billionaire. What does that mean?

Son. That I . . . [*Reflecting.*] If I'm to take part in this record-making, I can only do it before the boilers.

Billionaire [*to the* MUSEUM DIRECTOR]. Don't keep the ladies waiting on the bridge. [*The* MUSEUM DIRECTOR *goes. To his* SON, *slowly.*] Did you really travel on that ship as a stoker?

Son. I couldn't hold out under it, so I had to become a passenger again.

Billionaire. Did it specially attract you to . . .

Son. Oh, the steamer is the least important part of it.

Billionaire. You saw much to wonder at in your travels.

Son. It was as though scales fell from my eyes. The wrongs we are committing stood up clearly before me. We rich here—and there the others, strangling in want and misery—but people like ourselves. There's not a spark of right in it—why do we do it? I ask you why? Give me an answer that absolves us both, you and I.

Billionaire [*Staring at him.*] You ask me?

Son. Yes, and I shall never stop asking you. I have never been so grateful to you as now, never in my life. You gave me that trip, and but for it I should have stayed blind to the end of my days.

Billionaire. You will forget.

Son. Forget what is in me now, and fills me through and through? That will only disappear when I disappear too.

Billionaire. What is in you?

Son. The horror of that life which I have seen, with its toil and oppression.

Billionaire. Travel experiences are not enough to . . .

Son. Not enough?

Billionaire. You exaggerate superficial impressions.

Son. They burn in my blood. And the vividest picture of all is the 'Freedom of the Seas' as she lay in her wharf. Flags, music, passengers in light clothes strolling up and down the decks, chattering, gay. And a few yards underneath their feet, hell. Men feeding fire-belching holes, quivering bodies burning to death. So that we may make speed, speed. I had started to sail on that ship, I had set my foot on her deck—but I had to turn back—and only on that 'Albatross' I began to feel my conscience lighter.

Billionaire. And have you conquered all that now?

Son. Now I feel it more than ever. Here on this wonderful private yacht of yours. I feel the blood beating in my heart with shame. Look at us lying back in these chairs in indolence, wailing about the heat the sun pours down on us. We sip iced water for ease, and not a grain of dust irritates our throats. And underneath the soft soles of your white shoes here, there are men with boiling fever in their veins. Tear away this wall of wooden planks—see how thin it is, but yet how fearfully it divides—and look down, look down, all of you. And the words will stick in your mouths before any of you will brag before one of them down there. [*The* DOCTOR *strolls in.*]

Son. [*Springing toward him.*] What was it, doctor?

Doctor. A yellow stoker collapsed.

Son. Dead?

Doctor [*Shaking his head*]. Heat-stroke.

Son. Where have you put him?

Doctor. I had him laid in front of a ventilator shaft.

Son. Not brought up here?

Doctor. No.

Son [*briefly*]. Wait here. [*He goes.*]

Doctor [*Drops into a chair. To the* NEGRO]. Ice water. [*To the* BILLIONAIRE]. I find this long drifting at sea extraordinarily quieting to the nerves. I'd like to prescribe it for you five days every other month. [BILLIONAIRE *does not move.*] I promise myself success with this new diet I've put you on. [BILLIONAIRE *silent.*] Of course we can't offer you the keen and healthful excitement of meeting your son again, but your daughter will be able to invent surprises of a more moderate kind for you. I'll talk to her about it. [*Voices and footsteps approach. The* DOCTOR *puts down his glass.*] Are they playing deck games? [SAILORS *bring the half-naked yellow stoker.*]

Son. This way.

Doctor [*Standing up*]. What does this mean?

Son. Set two chairs together. Take hold, doctor, this is a life and death matter. [*To the* SAILORS]. Lay him down. [*To the* NEGRO]. Ice water. [*To the* DOCTOR]. Come over here, doctor, you understand this better than I. Wash his chest. [*To the* BILLIONAIRE]. Will you allow your personal physician to lend a hand? [*To the* DOCTOR]. Is it dangerous?

Captain [*Coming in—low, to* BILLIONAIRE]. I couldn't prevent him.

[*The* BILLIONAIRE *shakes his head decidedly. The* DAUGHTER *and the* SINGER *come in.*]

Son [*To the* DAUGHTER]. Won't you help us here, sister? A man may be dying. [*The* DAUGHTER *goes nearer*]. Wet your hands in that ice water and lay them on his hot chest. I am only calling you to your simple duty. [*The* DAUGHTER *does so. To the* DOCTOR, *beside himself.*] Doctor, save him—you've got to, or I am a murderer!

Billionaire [*Stares down at the group—his lips move—at last he mutters*]. The horror!

Singer [*Focussing her kodak—to the* MUSEUM DIRECTOR]. I've never had pictures like these before. [*She snaps.*]

ACT THREE

Square room with rear wall of glass—the BILLIONAIRE'S *work-room. Right and left on the walls, from the floor to the ceiling, huge brown-toned photographs of factories. Broad desk with swivel-chair; another chair at the side. Smokestacks outside, close and straight like pillars of dead lava holding up cloud-mountains of smoke.*

Billionaire [*At the desk*]. How many dead?

Secretary [*Standing by the desk*]. The exact number of victims could not be ascertained, for the men who were saved and brought into the light, rushed away and had not reported yesterday.

Billionaire. What did they do that for?

Secretary. They must have experienced untold horror the three days they were shut up under the ground.

Billionaire. And now they flee from it, farther and farther?

Secretary. They came up distracted as if from their graves, screaming and shuddering.

Billionaire. Whoever is absent from his place by the day after tomorrow will not be taken back again.

Secretary [*Making a note*]. By the day after tomorrow.

Billionaire. How did the meeting go? Was I contradicted? Was I allowed to speak without interruption?

Secretary. No.

Billionaire. Was my life in danger?

Secretary. It was indeed.

Billionaire. How did I protect myself?

Secretary. I had requisitioned troops. They were lined up before me ready to shoot.

Billionaire. Did anything happen?

Secretary. Only one man kept yelling interruptions.

Billionaire. What did he say?

Secretary. Murderer.

Billionaire. Was he not to be found?

Secretary. The crowd covered him.

Billionaire. Let him be found. Threaten to take steps if he is not delivered. [*The* SECRETARY *makes a note.*] Is everything quiet now?

Secretary. The shaft is being worked again today.

Billionaire. What means did I use?

Secretary. I announced the shutting down of the entire works.

Billionaire. Thanks. [*A green lamp lights on the desk.* BILLIONAIRE *takes up the receiver. Surprised*]. Who? . . . My daughter? . . . Here? . . . Yes, I will see her. [*To the* SECRETARY]. Replace me in Factory 24. There has been an explosion there—I said I would be down during the afternoon. [*The*

SECRETARY *makes a note.*] Thanks. [*The* SECRETARY *leaves, left, through an invisible door. The* BILLIONAIRE *stands up, makes a few rapid steps toward the wall right, changes his mind, returns to his chair and plunges into his work. One of the servants opens a padded invisible door. The* DAUGHTER *enters.* SERVANT *goes. The* BILLIONAIRE *looks round.*] Your first visit to your father's business house.

Daughter [*Looking about*]. Yes—I am seeing it for the first time.

Billionaire. Another world! . . . Is the matter so urgent that you couldn't keep it until this evening before the fire?

Daughter. I can only explain it to you here.

Billionaire. Am I to prepare myself for the most joyful news?

Daughter. What is that?

Billionaire. I asked something of you that day we were waiting for your brother . . . On the yacht.

Daughter [*Shaking her head*]. I have never given that another thought.

Billionaire [*Suppressing his uneasiness. Gaily*]. Really not?

Daughter. It was on the yacht that I first saw my way.

Billionaire. To your brightest happiness?

Daughter. To my inevitable duty.

Billionaire [*Lifts his hand high in protest*]. Not that!

Daughter [*Calmly*]. When I took my hands from the seething breast of that yellow stoker they were marked. The scar sank into my blood, into my deepest heart. I have no choice. I feel the call. And submit to it willingly. You will show me the place where I shall best obey it.

Billionaire. What do you want to do?

Daughter. Send me where the suffering is worst, to the injured in your factories. I will nurse them.

Billionaire. You don't know what you are saying.

Daughter. I do. You can at least respect my action by believing it. I want to go to the shaft where the catastrophe happened.

Billionaire. What catastrophe?

Daughter. You put down the agitation yourself.

Billionaire. Who carries you these tales?

Daughter. Reports in the papers are forbidden. Yes, I know you are powerful.

Billionaire [*Stares at her. A pause*]. Let it be. [*He gets up and goes to her.*] I shall not ask you with words. You have a hundred to every one of mine. It is an unequal fight between father and daughter. The end is a foregone conclusion. [*He takes her hands, looks intently at her.*] No . . . no. Such little hands . . . such weak hands. [*He anticipates her contradiction with a shake of the head.*] Yes, yes . . . strong and hard. And only I know what for—to storm fortresses, to heap up ruins, and the victims under them. Shall I tell you who the victim is?

Daughter. Now I don't understand you.

Billionaire. Do you want to make me your victim? [DAUGHTER *looks at him wonderingly.*] Then turn back. You will find your task lies nearer home. Does it seem a paltry one to you? It seems important to me because it concerns your father.

Daughter [*Drawing her hands away*]. I have no right, while others . . .

Billionaire. Father and Daughter . . . not by quarrelling! Only by asking and yielding.

Daughter. I thank you today for the lovely years of youth . . .

Billionaire. And as lovely a future.

Daughter [*Strongly*]. Which will be a shining memory through my new life of duty. [*She stands up and puts out her hand*]. My decision was made so easily. Would you make it hard for me by having me change it?

Billionaire [*Without taking her hand*]. Where are you going now?

Daughter. To my sisters and brothers.

Billionaire [*In a dead voice*]. So that's where you're going . . .

Daughter. Will you still know me among the poorest of the poor?

Billionaire [*Supporting himself against the desk*]. You're going there . . . [*The* DAUGHTER *hesitates . . . turns to the door. The* SERVANT *opens.* DAUGHTER *goes. The* BILLIONAIRE *falters . . . makes a timid gesture.*] There . . . there . . . there . . . [*Then pulls himself together and rings. The* SECRETARY *enters.*] Shut down the shaft. [*The* SECRETARY *makes a note.*] No! [*Clutching his brow*]. It's here or there . . . it can't be blown away . . . no one has power to do that! [*Firmly to the* SECRETARY]. My daughter wishes to dedicate herself to Samaritan work. You will meet her at the shaft and wherever accidents occur in my factories. Repudiate her . . . I know my daughter no longer.

Secretary. Does your daughter know about the coral?

Billionaire. No; besides the two servants, nobody knows. [*Business-like again*]. We were interrupted . . .

Secretary [*Reads from his notebook*]. In the afternoon I represent you at Factory 24.

Billionaire. Tomorrow at noon I shall attend the first half of the Missions meeting myself; I am to be appointed honorary president. Come in the car at two. Under the pretext of fetching something I shall leave the hall. You return in my place and read my contribution to them. I'll give you the papers. [*He looks for it in a drawer of the desk. The green lamp flashes*].

Secretary. Telephone. [*The* BILLIONAIRE *springs up—stares at the lamp*]. I'll come back later to . . .

Billionaire [*Brusquely*]. Stay here! . . . Go now. Yes . . . later. [*The* SECRETARY *goes. The* BILLIONAIRE *takes the receiver up slowly*]. Who . . . [*He lets it fall from his slack fingers onto the desk. His mouth quivers*]. My son . . . [*The* SERVANT *admits the* SON *and goes. The* BILLIONAIRE *stiffly erect goes towards him.*] I have not seen you the last few days.

Son. Since . . .

Billionaire. I am not asking where you were. The time is past for me to keep watch over your comings and goings. You must justify your actions to yourself now. You are grown up.

Son. You make it easy for me . . .

Billionaire. Perhaps it was important to tell you this. Is that what you came for?

Son. The reason . . .

Billionaire. I will not probe into you to find it out. Sit down. In this stern work-a-day room . . .

Son. Which you have always jealously kept me out of . . .

Billionaire. Is it your ambition to see yourself in my place?

Son. Not in yours.

Billionaire. I'll not offer it to you. I'm not tired yet. The strings are still taut in my fingers. I shall, and can, go on working. The successor arrives too early. You shall not dethrone me today, nor tomorrow either.

Son. That was not my intention.

Billionaire. It would help you to prepare your life accordingly.

Son. You narrow the field.

Billionaire. It is your only chance. The work is my share.

Son. I know how you mean to go on.

Billionaire. You see, the gates are well barred.

Son. I stand compelled, and therefore I must pacify my conscience?

Billionaire. A compulsion lies on you too.

Son [*After a pause*]. Will you answer certain questions that burn in me like fire?

Billionaire. If our boundaries are sharply drawn and understood—yes.

Son. Such deep contradictions split all your dealings.

Billionaire. Do you concern yourself with me?

Son. I can concern myself with nothing else.

Billionaire. What has made me so unexpectedly interesting?

Son. This monstrous wealth that you have assembled . . .

Billionaire. I have already mentioned my working-powers.

Son. That is not working-power, it is . . .

Billionaire. Wherein lies the riddle?

Son. Here the ruthless profits . . . and there the limitless charity that you give. The 'Warm Heart of the Earth' . . . and the stone that you must bear in your inmost soul.

Billionaire. I don't want to solve that riddle for you.

Son. Because shame of confessing it holds you back.

Billionaire. It shall remain my secret.

Son. I tear at the veil you hide behind. You know your wealth is a mortal sin, and stifle knowledge with your "Open Thursday."

Billionaire. The explanation would not suffice.

Son. No, these gifts of yours are absurd, ridiculous. You can't pay that way for the blood . . .

Billionaire. I shed?

Son. No, those are accidents. But you threaten with bloodshed when they dare to cry out.

Billionaire. Did you see that?

Son. Now I must confess what it nearly drove me to yesterday.

Billionaire. Why yesterday?

Son. I was at the shaft while you were speaking. You had to appear there yourself to put down that uprising. I was down below in that haggard crowd—and saw you standing there behind the menacing guns. So cold and

far away. Your words cracked down upon the gathering like bits of ice. No one dared to lift his voice again. Until you said the works would be shut down, and thousands—children and women—delivered up to hunger. That tore one mouth open.

Billionaire. So it was you . . .

Son. Cried out murder!—— And that was not the last.

Billionaire. It was the last I heard.

Son. Could I have but forgotten that it was my father standing up there—[*He reaches into his pocket, then lays a revolver on the table*]. I do not wish to be tempted twice.

Billionaire [*Shoves the gun aside*]. You wouldn't have hit me.

Son. I meant to try it.

Billionaire [*Shaking his head and smiling*]. No, not me. So this need not stand as a shadow between us two. [*He puts out his hand*]. Don't let it bother you.

Son [*Staring at him*]. Do you puff it away like a grain of dust on your coat?

Billionaire. Not *my* coat.

Son. Forget and forgive?

Billionaire. So there was nothing to forgive.

Son. No, not for you. No one else can do that. Not that. One allots one's own atonement. And I will make mine so heavy that maybe on my dying day I shall dare to raise my eyes again.

Billionaire. To me?

Son. No, you've taken me back today. You've got no time to waste.

Billionaire. Then whom do you set over you as judge?

Son. The least of your workmen.

Billionaire. What does that mean?

Son. Until another's despair drives him to the same, I shall stand down there with them.

Billionaire. In the uprising?

Son. In the peace that will be spread around if I become one with them all, and no more than the least of them.

Billionaire [*Pushes the revolver towards him.*] The time is now. [*He turns his face away.*]

Son [*Jumps up and runs to him*]. Oh, tell me why all this should be—tell me why.

Billionaire. Come. [*He leads him to the photographs*]. See there? Grey factories. Narrow yards. [*Crossing to the great window rear.*] Do you see that? Where is the earth here—grass blades—bushes—? From such as this I came. . . Do you know my life? I have kept it hidden from you. But it is read in all the schools. I had another life for you to live, and I have let you live it. Yours, not mine. . . I came up out of nothing, so the books say. . . I swung myself up out of that very poverty here—I tell you this now. And I have never forgotten it. Not for a single hour have I allowed myself to drowse. I set these pictures about me—I made this wall of glass so that none of that might be hidden—it was to goad me into wakefulness should I ever fall weary and seek to rest. It was for warning and admonition in my blood—only not down again—not down again to that.

Son [*Withdrawing from him*]. You . . .

Billionaire. I can warn you, you'll believe me. It swallowed up my father and my mother. Its arm was already grasping after me—but I escaped.

Son. You know . . .

Billionaire. A single moment upset you. I have shuddered before it for a lifetime. So terrible is life. . . . Do you wish to go down there?

Son. You tear the very last thing out of my hands. . . .

Billionaire. What is that?

Son. My only excuse for you—that never having known, you could not grasp the suffering of others.

Billionaire. I bear the cry within my breast.

Son. Are you a tiger? Worse, for the tiger knows not what he does. You know the torture of your victims . . . and. . . . [*He grasps the gun, but lays it down again.*]

Billionaire. I or another. . .

Son. Everyone is. . .

Billionaire. Be thankful to me.

Son. For this?

Billionaire. That you need never be who I am.

Son [*Calmly*]. Your blood is mine. . .

Billionaire. Do you feel it too?

Son. It makes the task worth while.

Billionaire. Of saving me from the pursuing horror?

Son. Of stifling these terrible desires, and holding steadfast by the side of the humblest of your employees. [Billionaire *stands stiffly.*] You can't prevent it. I shall take work wherever I can find it.

Billionaire. [*Collapsing at his feet*]. Mercy . . . mercy!!

Son [*Coldly*]. Upon whom?

Billionaire. Mercy! . . .

Son. And that may be my cry to you on the day you deny me and my comrades bread. [*Before the* SERVANTS *have the door fully open, he is gone, right.*]

Billionaire [*Bounding up at last. He looks for the revolver and thrusts it into his pocket*]. Not here . . . in the heart of the woods. Green bowers for the glazing eyes, a bit of blue heaven fluttering down, tinkle of little birds. [*Glancing sideways at the walls*]. Stopped? Cut off? . . . Failed in the flight? . . . Overtaken? . . . [*Swinging his arms about*]. Let me go! . . . Don't touch me! . . . With a child's terror I fear you, all of you! [*He runs around the line of photographs, panting, beating upon them with his hands*]. A way out. . . . A way out. . . [*Screaming*]. A way out! [SECRETARY *enters from left. Looks questioningly.* BILLIONAIRE *stares at him*].

Secretary [*Embarrassed*]. You're—papers? [*The* BILLIONAIRE *is silent.*] You wish to give me some papers?

Billionaire [*Staggering to the desk and collapsing in a chair*]. Daughter and son . . . down . . . down. My children have deserted me. [SECRETARY *silent.* BILLIONAIRE *glances up at him.*] Do you understand what it means to have worked for your children all your life long—and then to have them come to you, their father, and knock the whole thing out of your hands?

Secretary. Your son?

Billionaire [*Crying out*]. Who will help now to pull down mountains—to cover this? [*The* SECRETARY *looks at him inquiringly.*] Will no one help me now out of the darkness of my past?

Secretary. Your achievements are so gigantic, your past needs no embellishment.

Billionaire. No. . .?

Secretary. Your work stands out the greater for it.

Billionaire. I give it up—I'll pay with all my riches—I'll give my life in exchange for any other man's [*Full of deep feeling.*] Who'll lend me a life that was bright from its first days on? In my son I can find that no more—down. . . Where is the exchange I have longed for and wooed in the fever of work and the rage for possession—on the heights of my mountainous riches? . . . In whom can I now sink myself and lose this fear, this turmoil that destroy me? Whose life—smooth and good life—for mine?

Secretary [*Looking down at him with growing emotion*]. Your son has chosen another way. No disappointment is bitterer. But as it repeats itself so many thousandfold, it is as if it were a law. Father and son strive away from each other. It is always a struggle of life and death. [*Pause.*] I opposed my father too, and although I felt the hurt it was to him, yet I was forced to hurt him. . . . [*After another pause.*] I don't know yet what it was that drove me to it. The desire to try out life myself—perhaps it was that. The need to stand alone is stronger than everything else. [*With heightened animation.*] There are few homes like mine. I have a wonderful youth to look back upon. I was an only son. Mother and father lavished an infinite treasure of love upon me. And in the shelter of their care I saw and heard nothing of the wretchedness and irritations of everyday. Sunlight lay on all our quiet rooms. Even death passed us by. My parents—even today, they still live only for me. Then I passed into the little university, and the urge for independence began to possess me. I broke away and went into the world. . . . I have been through many a dark hour. Buffeted here and there—but deep down nothing could shake me, for I possessed the greatest riches of all, endless and inexhaustible—the living memory of a happy childhood. Whatever might come later could be only waves upon the surface of a lake whose clearness mirrored the blue of heaven. So untroubled, so calm, within me lies that perfect past.

[*The* BILLIONAIRE *has raised his face toward him. He listens with deepest intentness. The* SECRETARY *gazes into space.*]

Billionaire. [*Looking about the table*]. The papers. [SECRETARY *gives them to him. He speaks with a great effort.*] Go. [*The* SECRETARY *takes the papers, turns to the door. The* BILLIONAIRE *pulls the revolver out of his pocket and presses the trigger. His* SECRETARY, *shot through the back, falls. The* BILLIONAIRE *stands immobile.*] My life—for another's . . . that was bright . . . from the first day on. . . . [*Goes slowly forward to the body and bends down . . . slips the coral off the watch-chain. Holds it before him on his open palm.*] This is the life I thirst for . . . every day

of this life. . . . I covet and long for. [*Flings back his head.*] Those bright days shall make me happy. . . . [*He slips the coral on his watch-chain. Then wrenches open the door and shoots again into the air. The two* SERVANTS *rush in. One remains in the doorway standing—the other bends over the* SECRETARY.]

First Servant [*In the doorway*]. The coral?

Second Servant [*Kneeling upright, shaking his head*]. Arrest the Secretary.

ACT FOUR

Room of examining magistrates—blue square with many entrances by iron-barred doors behind which narrow passages lose themselves. A hanging lamp of clear glass lights the place brightly. One small iron table at which the clerk—with eye-shade—is seated.

The FIRST JUDGE *is standing in an attitude of reflection. The two* SERVANTS, *left.* GUARD *comes in, right.*

First Judge. Put the light out.

[GUARD *strides to switchboard, the lamp goes out. Frosted lamps glow in the corners.*]

First Judge [*Goes to the table and takes up the receiver.*] Relief, please. [*To the* SERVANTS.] You may now . . . [*on second thoughts.*] Or wait another minute or two. [*He has the clerk give him the dossier, reads, shakes his head. To the* SERVANTS.] Did the secretary ever allow the coral to . . . [*Quickly.*] It is possible that the coral had been exchanged *for once,* to . . . [*The* SECOND JUDGE *comes in, rear.*]

Second Judge. No result.

First Judge [*Gives him the papers*]. Nothing more than that I now have certain doubts.

Second Judge. There's something like genius in the consistency with which he persists in masking his person.

First Judge. His silence is certainly consistent enough.

Second Judge. He does not respond to the most obvious inquiries as to his earlier life—after all the foundation of every examination. But he receives them all as though he himself did not know. We have had to gather the data all ourselves.

First Judge. Yes, it seems as unknown to him as though he heard of his own life today for the first time.

Second Judge. Is he simply leading us on . . .

First Judge. What do you mean by that?

Second Judge. Are we to preach his past to him?

First Judge. To what end?

Second Judge. To wear us out.

First Judge. He's almost done that to me already.

Second Judge [*Reads—lets the sheet fall*]. He does not argue the point about the coral having been found on him.

First Judge. But he refuses to admit he's the secretary.

Second Judge. Then how does he explain the coral on his watch-chain. [*Reading.*] "This repeated question the prisoner consistently refuses to answer."

First Judge [*To* SERVANTS]. Was there never a plan to confuse you in the same connection for certain purposes?

First Servant. No. Our task would have been impossible if there had been.

Second Servant. The murdered man set great store by the personal watch he set over his person.

Second Judge. It's perfectly transparent to me. Of course, it's a matter of the fellow's neck. That's a thing one rather jibs at. But we have the son's affidavit. In the conversation that had taken place just before between father and son, the son renounced his father's riches. The daughter renounced it too. The secretary had heard the excited talk next door and could not withstand the temptation to make himself their successor. So he made no bones about it and went ahead. Only the coral he hadn't time to exchange, though he would have liked to. [*To the* SERVANTS.] The shot brought you there at once.

Second Servant. I got him as he was trying to make it out of the door.

Second Judge. Did he try to get away?

First Servant. We didn't open the door—he did.

First Judge. Why should he run away when he gives himself out for the one who was attacked?

Second Judge [*Puts the dossier down*]. That very attempt at flight proves it. The report made more noise than he had reckoned with. He was bewildered and expected to get away, but the plan was knocked to pieces by the servants' watchfulness. Now he has to recall the part he first meant to play.

First Judge. But the resemblance is extraordinary, anyway. I've never experienced such a case of doubles.

Second Judge. Yes, if it weren't for the coral, we should be groping in the dark and never find a way out. [*Seizing the papers.*] Besides, how does he account for the attack which is alleged to have been made by the secretary?

First Judge. He says nothing.

Second Judge. Because there never was such an attack.

First Judge. But you said he wished to put himself in the murdered man's place.

Second Judge [*Wavers*]. So that would be a reason, wouldn't it?

Second Judge. To prompt him to kill.

First Judge. So he acted under stress.

Second Judge [*Excited*]. But he is the secretary.

First Judge [*Rubbing his eyes*]. I am really worn out. The sharp light—the passiveness of that man who hardly bothers to defend himself ——

Second Judge. I am thinking of disposing of certain means to make him more active. If showing him the coral has no effect . . . [*He picks it up from the table.*] The thing looks like a drop of blood still hanging onto the murderer. . . . [*He lays it down. To the* SERVANTS.] I don't need you any longer.

First Servant. What time tomorrow?

Second Judge. Let's hope this is the last. Ten times over the same litany. If you're needed, I'll send for you. [*They go.*]

First Judge. Do you promise yourself better success tonight?

Second Judge. Nothing more than a full confession.

First Judge [*Taken aback*]. How do you expect to bring him to that?

Second Judge. He insists he's the billionaire. Very well, I'll bring his children to face him. Now nature can be the judge. If he hesitates a single moment to approach them—for we know by their own testimony that he loved his son and daughter above everything—then he has as good as confessed. He can face the coral—it's a dead object—but before the weight of his victim's son and daughter's eyes nobody could stand up. And as he is no professional criminal, I'll have him break down like a straw.

First Judge. Honestly, I'm completely played out.

Second Judge. Stretch out on the sofa and have a good sleep. If you don't mind my disturbing you, I'll shout the news of our deliverance from this fortnight's martyrdom across to you.

First Judge. I'll go straight to the country for a week.

Second Judge. And I'll write a book about the case—popular edition of several hundred thousand! [FIRST JUDGE *goes off.* SECOND JUDGE *goes towards left and rings a bell beside a door. Led in by a* GUARD, *the* SON *and* DAUGHTER *in black—left.*] It is after all necessary that I bring you actually to confront the man. Gladly as I would have spared you this painful experience, the obstinate denial which my colleague has been unable to break down in him forces me to this step. I see no other way to get a confession out of him. And we must have the confession absolutely.

Son. Instruct us how we are to behave.

Second Judge. I intend to deal a surprise blow. He must not be allowed the least time for reflection. I must ask you to come absolutely noiselessly and not in any way to betray your presence here. For the present wait there in the back of the corridor—the guard stands round about the door. That won't strike him as peculiar. [*To* GUARD.] During the hearing I shall arrange to come this side so that the prisoner will have his back to your door. As soon as I pull out my handkerchief, admit the lady and gentleman.

Son. Is our task over when we have confronted him?

Second Judge. Obviously, I shall see that it last no longer than it must. But try to look at him intently. That is important. Especially you, madam, I should like to impress this upon. Take hold of yourself. You are about to experience the most horrible thing one could well encounter. You will think you are looking at your father who is dead.

Son. But some distinction must be possible.

Second Judge. We should have had it easy, then. The resemblance is complete. No bodily mark exists. Nature has played this trick on us.

Son. Only that coral can decide?

Second Judge. And irrevocably. Therefore do not forget that you have the secretary before you. [SON *and* DAUGHTER *off left with the* GUARD. *The* GUARD *comes back and waits behind the iron-barred door. To the* FIRST

GUARD.] Bring him in. [*The* GUARD *switches on the light. Off right* SECOND JUDGE *puts on blue-glass spectacles.* GUARD *lets the* BILLIONAIRE *precede him into the room and remains at the door. His hands are bound in front of him with thin steel rope. He prepares to stand as he is now accustomed to do—without a sign of excitement.* SECOND JUDGE *for the moment does not notice him. Then he takes the revolver from the table and goes—merely interested in the weapon—to the* BILLIONAIRE.] Where do you buy this make? [BILLIONAIRE *is silent.*] I'd like one myself. But I can't very well pinch one that the law has confiscated. [BILLIONAIRE *smiles thinly.*] A close-kept secret?

Billionaire. A present.

Second Judge. Indeed? Who from? [BILLIONAIRE *shakes his head.*] Surely from no tender hand.

Billionaire. From the tenderest.

Second Judge. Oh, come, that is unnatural.

Billionaire. Yes—it was unnatural.

Second Judge. Was it for you to use on yourself if ever you should be untrue?

Billionaire. I was the target.

Second Judge. Who wanted to shoot you? [BILLIONAIRE *slowly nods his head.*] Did you tear the weapon out of his hand?

Billionaire. He put it down on the desk.

Second Judge [*Quickly*]. The Billionaire? [BILLIONAIRE *silent. The* SECOND JUDGE *nods with relief and goes to the right.*] Let's reconstruct the situation. Turn towards me. [BILLIONAIRE *does so.*] Wait a bit. The metal's got a bit dull—it must have shone rather before. [*He pulls out his handkerchief and rubs it. The* GUARD *left, moves back from the door.*]

The Second Judge. Of course it's all poppycock about the gun lying about on the table. In fact your whole story is so completely muddled that there's no use trying to grope for sense in it any more. The long and short of the matter is this: under some pretext or other you got behind your victim's back, pulled the gun out of your trousers pocket, and stood all set and ready, exactly as you see me standing now, with this same distance between you—[*The* GUARD *has come in with the* SON *and* DAUGHTER. *They stand waiting.*] Turn your back!

The Billionaire [*Turns around. Without hesitation he goes toward his* SON *and* DAUGHTER]. Children! In black? Has there been a death—close to us? You wonder why I don't know of it. I am out of touch with you all for the present, locked up under the strictest watch. An intolerable error that must be cleared up first. I am all imaginable pains to destroy this dreadful suspicion. But the courts are conscientious. Every trifle has weight. A bit of coral that was found on me—the revolver there which I am supposed to have carried in my pocket. [*To the* SON.] Will you not explain where it came from?

Son [*Mastering his agitation*]. It is my property, sir.

Second Judge. How did it come into the secretary's possession?

Son. I laid it on the table by my father.

Second Judge. Valuable information. The revolver, lying on the open table-top, prompted the deed. What did you give it to your father for?

Son. I—cannot answer that question.

Billionaire. I have not betrayed you, either.

Son [*Sharply*]. Because you know nothing about it.

Billionaire. You seem to be talking to someone else, not to me. Have I become a stranger to you because I stand under suspicion? [*With a strangely watchful expression.*] Do you both believe I am the secretary? You—my own children—are you seeing the secretary in me?

Son [*Wearily*]. Sir, do you need my sister and me here any longer? [*The* DAUGHTER *screams—covers her face with her hands.*]

Second Judge. I thank you, no. [*The* SON, *supporting the* DAUGHTER, *go. The* JUDGE *walks up and down the room.*] Monstrous. The utmost extreme of stubbornness!—Are you not ashamed? [*Disconcerted.*] Smiling, are you?

Billionaire. I saw my children ——

Second Judge. Do you take pleasure in other people's torment?

Billionaire. But they did not see me.

Second Judge. They saw the murderer of their father. You are he. You—his secretary. Don't bring your idiotic fairy-tale forward again, please—we know it. And were the coral not the powerful proof it is, this would have unmasked you—that those two whom you brazenly pretended were your children, rejected you as an utter stranger.

Billionaire [*Imperviously*]. That—does not suffice.

Second Judge. Are you sure? Because you

refuse your confession? We excuse you that now. You may continue to shroud yourself in your monumental silence. The time has come for us to speak! [*He signs to the* GUARD *who leads the* BILLIONAIRE *away. The* JUDGE *telephones.*] Relief, please. [*Loudly.*] Yes—relief! [*Goes excitedly up and down. Stamps angrily.*] This is . . . [FIRST JUDGE *hastens in, rear.*] You thought you heard wrong, I expect. No, there's no change. The man is not to be caught. He confronts them without a tremor—and finds fault with them for talking coldly to him. [*The* FIRST JUDGE *reads.*] We're done now, I think.

First Judge. No. I'm for pressing him hard—this thing interests me. [*Striking his brow.*] Simple as daylight!

Second Judge. Were you enlightened in a dream?

First Judge. I am furious.

Second Judge. Hardly the state of mind for brilliant discoveries.

First Judge. He's transsubstantiated himself into the billionaire.

Second Judge. And expects to stay there.

First Judge. Therefore we must now reverse the process ——

Second Judge. Abracadabra—one, two, three.

First Judge. And get him back into the secretary.

Second Judge. By what sleight of hand do you mean to effect this?

[*The* GUARD *comes in at the right and switches off the arc-light.*]

First Judge. He must be born all over again!—That's it! I'll put him back in his cradle and let him kick and crow as happy as the day's long. So far the Billionaire has never entered his life—that is a later chapter not to be recalled by a single syllable. I'll set him up such a hole-proof picture of his life and wrap him so gently and gradually in childhood recollections that he shall entirely forget what he's here for. [*Searching through the papers.*] We've all the material here—not a detail missing. A strikingly bright and happy past, too; he hasn't hardened all the way through yet. I shall have him as soft as butter once I start bringing his good days back to him.

Second Judge. He didn't mind facing his victim's children ——

First Judge. Children are something else. In the last resort it is one's own life that counts.

Second Judge. I should hate to give up the case as hopeless.

First Judge. Everything we've tried so far has fallen through, and my attempt may do the same. But there is a certain power of suggestion in delving into the past.

Second Judge. Would you like the glasses?

First Judge. We'll have the lights down this time. [*To* GUARD.] Don't switch on the light. Bring him in. [GUARD *goes, right.*] That alone will be a kindness to him. And for the rest I shall find the right "Now Granny will tell you a story" tone.

Second Judge. With the wicked wolf at the end.

First Judge. That gets hold of the murderer. [*The* SECOND JUDGE *goes. The* GUARD *comes in with the* BILLIONAIRE. *The* FIRST JUDGE *is deep in the documents before him.*] This love of animals is truly beautiful. [*Glancing up at the* BILLIONAIRE.] Had it really a black spot in the middle of its forehead? [*The* BILLIONAIRE *raises his head obediently.*] The puppy you saved from drowning. The river was pretty shallow there, I daresay? One doesn't venture very far out at ten years old. [*The* BILLIONAIRE *breathes heavily.*] Just a bit of a stream running by the little town, wasn't it? No strong current, of course— or did the tides run high in spring? [*The* BILLIONAIRE *begins to sway curiously from the waist.*] Then the water would go sweeping by with all sorts of bushes and things it had uprooted, and sometimes it flooded the banks and got into the cellars. That meant saving the family stores, and what a jolly salvaging party it always was! Father and Mother at it as hard as they could go and the boy helping like a Trojan, naturally. Always in everybody's way, but convinced that he was being absolutely indispensable, eh? [*The* BILLIONAIRE *nods slowly.*] Yes—a little bit of a town like that has its catastrophes too. Every day a different one. The wind pulls the cap off a fellow's head and rushes round the corner with it —— [*Suddenly.*] What colour was your school-cap—green?

Billionaire [*With a chuckling smile*]. I've . . .

First Judge. You don't remember the colour distinctly?

Billionaire. I've . . . forgotten so much.

First Judge [*Sharply watching him. After*

a pause]. Doesn't that sort of thing last long with you? I mean one usually likes to recall one's pleasant times long after they're gone. After all, they're our only indestructible possession. You especially could refresh yourself with your remembrances, for the picture of your past is remarkably charming and bright. Yes, you had an enviable youth. [*Turning over the documents.*] It is a pleasure even to read about it. [BILLIONAIRE *stealing a look into the papers.*] Light and sunshine—sunshine and light. No trace of a shadow anywhere. [*Glancing up.*] You must be inexpressibly grateful to your parents, aren't you?

Billionaire [*In a tone almost like singing*]. My parents. . . .

First Judge. I see them with their hands outspread over their only child in a gesture of infinite love. Did they ever once strike you?

Billionaire. Did they . . . never once strike me?

First Judge. Yes, tell me.

Billionaire. Yes . . . you tell me.

First Judge [*Looks at him in astonishment. Then jestingly*]. Very well, let us now open the Book of the Past. Chapter one—The Home. A little provincial town set in a pleasant green landscape. Father—pastor. Do you see him now?

Billionaire [*Groping before him*]. . . . set in a green landscape . . . Father . . . pastor . . .

First Judge. Chapter two—The son is born and becomes the centre of life at the parsonage. Every care is lavished on him. He waxes and thrives. . . . You will hardly remember your very earliest childhood?

Billionaire. Now . . . I remember.

First Judge. In the next section you're fairly under way. School-days. The school is not large . . . there are few pupils, and you are the best among them. Learning comes easily to you . . . you encounter no obstacles . . . this period is a thornless path. Or perhaps you remember a cloud?

Billionaire. If you know of none . . .

First Judge. Good, then there was none. Let's go on. This, then, was the frame in which your life was set. It is seldom that a young man has things made as smooth for him as they were for you . . . and your own inclinations met your parents' plans half way. To a rare degree you developed the capacity for becoming a happy man. I can think of nothing finer than this complete harmony between a person and his environment. No disrupting experience to poison the blood . . . only the quiet succession of days like flowers on the chains children weave! . . . [*Intensely.*] Doesn't it flood your heart with warmth to hear me recite this evangel of your past to you? It must awaken in you such wistful longing for that paradise you used to wander in . . . in your so cherished and favoured youth. Sheltered and loved—protected against the blows that others have to suffer even at that age. It is like looking into a crystal sea, clear down to the very bed where only bright round pebbles lie on the white sand and nothing else. Say yes to that happy past of yours—and save the most precious of all possessions.

Billionaire. . . . the best . . . of all possessions. . . .

First Judge [*In growing excitement*]. Do you say yes to that past?

Billionaire [*Faintly breathing the words*]. Yes . . . yes . . . yes! . . .

First Judge. Now you will sign your deposition.

Billionaire [*Already raising his hand*]. Yes.

First Judge [*To* GUARD]. Undo his hand. [*To the* BILLIONAIRE.] Your acquiescence has convicted you. That past is the secretary's. You are the secretary. [*As the* BILLIONAIRE *hesitates.*] I am telling you this so that you sign correctly—with the secretary's name. [*The* BILLIONAIRE *writes in the air.*] What are you doing? Can't you remember your own handwriting any more? [*The* BILLIONAIRE *signs.*] The examination is closed. I hope that you will not return again to your former denial of your identity. From now on it would be useless. [*He signs to the* GUARD.]

The Billionaire [*As the* GUARD *leads him out, right*]. . . . The best . . . the best . . . [*He goes.*]

First Judge [*Stands thinking. Then telephones*]. Comprehensive confession.

Second Judge [*Entering*]. It sounds like a fairy-tale really. [*Reads in the dossier.*] Worked like a charm. Didn't he see the trap you were decoying him into?

First Judge [*Ruminating*]. Don't you think it extraordinary?

Second Judge. He was overtired.

First Judge. That was not my impression. In fact he seemed to come to life as he listened

to his past. [*The* GUARD *enters, right. Quickly.*] Has he anything to tell me?

Second Judge. Hasn't he already gone back to the other?

Guard. No.

Second Judge. Has he gone to pieces?

Guard. He stands up straight, looking upwards and muttering.

First Judge. Just as he did here . . . in a dream. . . .

Second Judge [*After a silence*]. Well, there's a terrible awakening in store for him.

ACT FIVE

Small square yard sunk between the shafts of prison-walls on four sides. Patch of mean grass with iron bench in the centre, fastened into the ground. A low door left and a high, narrow door rear

GUARD *leads* BILLIONAIRE *in from the left, a convict now in black linen with red neckband.*

Billionaire. The ante-yard of death?

Guard. You have an hour to stay here.

Billionaire [*Nods*]. The last short hour has struck. [*Looking about*]. A gentle custom . . . feet tread upon green grass and heaven's blue streams overhead. [*He stands motionless.*]

Guard. Do you wish to see your visitors?

Billionaire. Ah—the curious have come? I shall not resist. [GUARD *goes.* BILLIONAIRE *sits on the bench.* GUARD *admits the* MAN IN GRAY, *and goes.*]

Man in Gray [*Has undergone an obvious transformation. His suit—the same colour as before—is immaculately tailored. He wears light spats over patent leather shoes, gray top hat with rounded crown, white kid gloves with black stitching. Comes rushing in at the* BILLIONAIRE, *stretching out his hand*]. Still in time. This is luck indeed. I should have put in an appearance before this, but business, you know. . . . Brimstone mine . . . big thing. Yearly profits of . . . But for the moment you're rather out of that world of income and dividends and so forth, of course. Besides I didn't come here to talk to you on that subject. I came to thank you.

Billionaire. I didn't know . . .

Man in Gray. You don't mind if I sit down beside you, do you . . . on the bench of repentance. One can have at least a quarter of an hour's peace and quiet. Well, then, from the bottom of my heart, thanks, thanks, and thanks again.

Billionaire. I wish you would tell me.

Man in Gray. I am the Man in Gray who came to you once with a manifest that was to give harmony to all the world at one single stroke—and you refused to sign it. At the same time—the thing I find most admirable about it now is that you should have taken the time; I shouldn't have—you demonstrated to me the hopelessness of my beneficent project. Your arguments struck me like the blows of a club . . . and I left the 'Warm Heart of the Earth,' hurling curses back at you strong enough to fell an ox. Is it getting dark?

Billionaire [*With a thin smile*]. You are mistaken.

Man in Gray. I wished you straight into the deepest pit of hell.

Billionaire. Not me. . . .

Man in Gray. You never felt the impact?

Billionaire. Because the conversation you refer to was with the Billionaire, not with me.

Man in Gray [*Laughs unrestrainedly*]. You need not play your rôle before me. Just put your secretary in your pocket. Or perhaps you haven't one in these pyjamas they put you in for the night without end? [*Tapping him on the shoulder.*] You're still my man fleeing from the terror.

Billionaire [*Taken aback*]. Don't talk so loud.

Man in Gray. Don't worry—I shall neither betray you nor set you free. Surely I have no cause for such an act of ingratitude. Are you satisfied with me?

Billionaire. You are the only one. . . .

Man in Gray. Your trial was a pleasure to me. I wouldn't have disturbed it at any price. It was a stroke of genius to shove yourself into the secretary's skin and lap up the candy of his bright past. I could hear your lips smacking as they kept stuffing you with that glorious grub. How does your stomach feel now—good?

Billionaire. It was salvation.

Man in Gray. While the son—that rebirth you'd arranged for yourself, all peace and joy. and so forth—turned away from you.

Billionaire. Not a word of that!

Man in Gray. But you have no more to fear now. And from the safe bank one can look back over the turbulent sea with a malicious joy that is wholesome too. You've saved

yourself—and in a few minutes your head won't be in danger from it any more. You can be sure of that.

Billionaire. What do you thank me for?

Man in Gray. Does not a casual glance upon my outer man tell you that?

Billionaire. You are dressed with a sort of challenging splendour.

Man in Gray. Merely to illustrate the inner structure. I'm in flight.

Billionaire. You? From what?

Man in Gray. From the world as you made it.

Billionaire. Then are you not going to curse me again?

Man in Gray. I bless you. You took me out of my pink clouds and set me on sober earth. Bolt upright on both feet. Your law ruled—flight! Woe to the stumbler, tramp him down. The flight surges over him, on and away. No grace, no mercy. Forward—forward! . . . Chaos is behind!

Billionaire. And did you gain on it?

Man in Gray. I was a good pupil. I heap up riches and set that glittering hill between them and me. Immense energy develops when once the law is known. Even in sleep one races on and springs out of bed in the morning with new plans ready. A wild chase. Thank heaven you did not take your secret with you to the grave—now I can announce to all mankind its true salvation.

Billionaire. Will you do that?

Man in Gray. It is already done. My leavings set them all wildly scrambling. All bonds snapped, the fight rages all along the line. Each against each, no hope for quarter.

Billionaire. And what is the goal you are storming towards?

Man in Gray. Nonsense, there is no goal.

Billionaire. But there is.

Man in Gray [*Looks at him disconcerted*]. Don't torture me.

Billionaire. It lies in the beginning.

Man in Gray. Yes—you had all the luck. You can afford to laugh at us. Besides you removed the cause that spurs on the race. But that remains a single instance—we can't all find a double in this world. . . . And I'll tell you something, too. [*With a gesture round his neck.*] And most of us would shy at the price too.

Billionaire. Do you call it high?

Man in Gray. [*Standing up.*] You can best estimate that yourself according to your own measure. You were never pettifogging when it came to paying the bill. I should like to stay longer, but . . . your time is limited too. Anyway let it be some joy to you that your great discovery will not vanish with you. [*Offering both his hands.*] Head up, then!

Billionaire. As long as it lasts.

Man in Gray [*Laughs. Waving his hat*]. Au revoir!

Billionaire. Where?

Man in Gray. Well—what is the correct leave-taking in a case like this anyway! [*The* GUARD *opens the door rear. The* MAN IN GRAY *goes. The* BILLIONAIRE *sits on the bench without moving, his chin on the back of his hand. The* GUARD *admits the* SON. GUARD *goes.*]

The Son [*Hesitates—then goes quickly to the* BILLIONAIRE, *reaching out his hand*]. I have come—to forgive you. [*The* BILLIONAIRE *looks slowly up at him.*] Don't you recognize me?

Billionaire. Oh, yes.

Son. My decision has taken you by surprise. Perhaps it is strange that a son should do such a thing. But that is the least. I want to save you.

Billionaire. Have you climbing-irons and rope-ladder all ready?

Son. I will recognize you as my father. [*The* BILLIONAIRE *stands up and goes behind the bench.*] Don't make it harder for me than it is already. I am as guilty as you, for I had aimed that gun at him, I had meant that very bullet for him, too. It's of no importance who it was that fired.

Billionaire. This is all incomprehensible to me.

Son. Believe me guilty with you, so that I need not flounder any longer in these frightful things.

Billionaire. But have you considered what I did?

Son. You did what we must all do at the sight of madness dancing in power.

Billionaire. Was your father mad?

Son. Power is madness.

Billionaire. Yes . . . he was powerful.

Son. And guilty! Behind your guilt stands his—colossal and inextinguishable. You are his victim as I am—as all others who think at all.

Billionaire. And do they all desire to kill?

Son. They must—the compulsion is not to be withstood. The temptation comes from those who thrust themselves above them. By

force they rise, by force they shall be torn down.

Billionaire. You make it easy for yourself . . .

Son. Did not my final confirmation come from you? I know your life—I read the reports breathlessly as they appeared. The sweetest childhood, the gentlest youth—where was there a sign of impulse to violence?

Billionaire. Your childhood was no less sweet . . .

Son. And yet I sought a weapon when the time came. I meant to punish, being swept away by my sense of justice—you meant to enrich yourself. The sight of force seduced you. My father set you the example—he always acted regardless of others—and so long as such examples are before us, so long will be tempted.

Billionaire. Do you mean to wipe out evil example—is that it?

Son. With your help.

Billionaire. What can I do?

Son. You are to renounce your position so high above the rest of us and come down to our level.

Billionaire. Your father should do this, you mean.

Son. I shall go to the judge and declare that from this conversation with you I realized that you were my father after all.

Billionaire. And the coral?

Son. Nothing must stand in the way. We have an immense task before us. The fate of mankind is at stake. We shall unite in the heat of work—and in our untiring zeal we shall be bound together as father and son.

Billionaire [*Shaking his head*]. No—I could never so belie myself.

Son. When your life depends on it?

Billionaire. Because the life you offer me depends on it.

Son. It will take some overcoming. It cost me a struggle to come to you like this. But I did so for the sake of higher things. My father's shadow stands behind you now. Serve this work and you will drive it away.

Billionaire. Not that way.

Son. I swear to you . . .

Billionaire. What?

Son. That I will be a son to you—a son who never lost his father.

Billionaire [*Comes close to him*]. Shall I name my condition?

Son. Anything.

Billionaire. Will you be the son to me that your father wished you to be?

Son. What does that mean?

Billionaire. Go back again to the bank where the sun is shining—then I shall lend myself to your wish. [*The* Son *stares at him.*] Otherwise the shadow that stands behind me will never be driven away.

Son. How are you talking to me?

Billionaire. Like your father. Is this first test too hard? [*The* Son *looks at him now timidly. The* Billionaire *puts his hand on his shoulder.*] It is good of you to have come once more. One loves to look at people who are young. Have you not a sister? Was she also ready to accept me as her father? You are decoys, but there are no more bridges. I am only more convinced than ever now. Leave me in my garden here. Green, is it not? And go on to your battlefield. It may be that peace does lead to war, but the man that comes out of that bath of blood tries to save himself. You would not help me, so I took my fate into my own hands. Should you rebuke me now, then, for refusing to lend you my support? [*He leads him towards the left.*] In no hour of your active life are you to abuse me. You have made bold plans . . . and if one or other of them should fail . . . or if, in the long run, they all should fail . . . don't belabour your father's memory with rage and reproaches for his not protecting you against disappointment . . . for reasons which it would obviously take too long to go into here. [*The* Priest *comes.*] There, you see—the one indispensable element is lacking—time! [*The* Son *goes. The* Billionaire *stands looking after him. The* Priest *has gone to the bench and looks at the* Billionaire, *who turns towards him.*] The third and last guest?

Priest. After what I have just seen, my task is very hard. You have received the greatest consolation your fellow-men could give you—reconciliation with the son of that unfortunate father.

Billionaire. You are mistaken. We parted at odds with each other. And if I accompanied him to the door, that was because I was the stronger of the two. I was supporting the defeated.

Priest. Did he not come to see you?

Billionaire. He set a trap for me to fall into. But I was on my guard.

Priest. Did he forgive you?

Billionaire. Had he reason to?

Priest. You took his father from him.

Billionaire [*Sitting down*]. Do you believe in the right of reprisal?

Priest. Earthly things must be allowed to run their course.

Billionaire. I exercised the right of reprisal, nothing more.

Priest. What injury had he done you?

Billionaire. The choice falls blindly . . . this one or another. They killed my mother and father both.

Priest [*Shrugs his shoulders*]. Your parents met a peaceful end.

Billionaire. Then what reason could I have had to kill?

Priest. In an incomprehensible turmoil of spirit you stretched out your hand for another man's riches.

Billionaire [*Nods*]. In an incomprehensible turmoil—that stamps your wisdom. You roll heaven from over me to breathe in joy beneath. You overwhelm me with your gifts.

Priest [*After a pause*]. You wished to have the coral; I have brought it for you. [*The* Billionaire *takes it and looks at it*]. You can dismiss me, if you wish . . . or close your ear to my words.

Billionaire. Speak.

Priest [*Sits down beside him*]. From the refuge which is opened to us when we leave this life which is like a house with dark windows . . .

Billionaire. Tell me about the house with dark windows.

Priest. From that refuge light could enter at a wider door than . . .

Billionaire. Yes, that is it.

Priest. And there is no such thing as too late. In one second the infinite treasure may be won.

Billionaire. What treasure?

Priest. The new Being that waits behind this span of life.

Billionaire. Does it lie in the future?

Priest. That future is his who knocks with a humble hand.

Billionaire [*Shaking his head*]. The old error remains.

Priest. Safe promises are given us.

Billionaire. Flight into the kingdom of heaven. The cross and vinegar are no salvation. In the end it is not to be found—in the beginning it is there, your paradise.

Priest. We are dispossessed . . .

Billionaire. Does that darken recognition? . . . I don't want to upset you or knock your tools out of your hand. But the deepest truth will never be proclaimed by you or the thousand of you. It is found always only by one man alone. And it is so enormous that it becomes incapable of all effectiveness. . . . You seek a refuge—I could tell you that you are on the wrong path. The goal jumps ahead of you a hundred times over and each time with a blow in your back. And your flight towards sanctuary goes ever more wildly forward. But you never arrive. Not that way . . . not that way.

Priest. Then tell me this: what is it that gives you—I can find no other word for it—your solemn tranquility?

Billionaire. I have reached the paradise again that lies behind all of us. A deed of violence brought me through its gates—one needs that, for the angels on either side bear swords of flame. And now I stand amidst the loveliest meadow green. And the blue of heaven streams over my head.

Priest. Are you thinking of your pleasant childhood?

Billionaire. Simple, is it not? "Become like little children . . ." Wisdom is only the matter of a phrase, too.

Priest. Why can we not remain children always?

Billionaire. That is a riddle you will not solve today or tomorrow either! [*The* Priest *stares out before him.*] . . . Do you see this?

Priest. It is the coral you asked for as your last request.

Billionaire. Do you know how it grows out of the bed of the sea? To the surface of the water—no higher. There it stands washed by the tides—moulded by the sea and bound forever to it. Fish are little events that go by in tiny tumult. Fascinating . . .

Priest. What do you mean?

Billionaire. Only to open one corner of the case the riddle is enclosed in. What would be best? Never to come out into the storm that drives towards the shore and drags us in its wake. There turmoil roars and drags us into the frenzy of life. We are all driven on . . . as we are all driven out of our paradise of quiet. . . . Bits broken off the dim coral-tree . . . wounded from the first day with a wound that does not heal, but burns and burns. It is the fearful pain goads us on our way. . . . What is that in your hand? [*He takes the*

PRIEST'S *hand with the black crucifix and lifts it high.*] That only dulls the pain. [*He holds the red coral to his breast with both hands.*] This delivers from sorrow! [*The high narrow door is opened. The* BILLIONAIRE *stands up.*]

Priest. I cannot go with you.

[*The* BILLIONAIRE *goes towards the door, walking steadily.*]

THE END

GAS—Part I

A PLAY IN FIVE ACTS

By GEORG KAISER

Translated from the German by HERMANN SCHEFFAUER

CHARACTERS

The Gentleman in White
The Billionaire's Son
The Daughter
The Officer
The Engineer
First Gentleman in Black
Second Gentleman in Black
Third Gentleman in Black
Fourth Gentleman in Black
Fifth Gentleman in Black
Government Commissioner
The Clerk
First Workman
Second Workman
Third Workman
The Girl
The Woman
The Mother
The Captain
A Machine-Gun Detachment, Workmen, Workwomen

The action takes place in the same country as that of "The Coral," but a generation later

GAS—Part I

ACT ONE

A vast square room, all in white, the office of the Billionaire's Son. *The rear wall is composed entirely of glass in large squares. The walls to right and left are covered from floor to ceiling with great charts bearing statistics, scales, and diagrams in black and white. To the left is a spacious desk and an arm-chair of austere design, a second arm-chair at the side. A smaller desk to the right. Visible through the glass wall in a murky violet light, the steep close-thronged shapes of great chimney-stacks from which flame and smoke pour in horizontal lines.*

Faint bursts of music come and go.

A young Clerk *at the smaller desk to the right.*

Enter noiselessly the Gentleman in White, *a strange, whimsical, phantom figure, entirely in white, including a chalk-white face. He shuts the door noiselessly, surveys the room, tip-toes towards the* Clerk, *touches him upon the shoulder.*

Gentleman in White. Music?

The Clerk [*turns up a startled face to him*].

Gentleman in White [*listens to sounds from overhead, and nods*]. Valse.

Clerk. How do you happen——?

Gentleman in White. Quite casually. A certain noiselessness—achieved by rubber soles. [*He seats himself in chair before desk and crosses his legs.*] The Chief?—busy? Upstairs?

Clerk. What do you wish?

Gentleman in White. A dancing party?

Clerk [*in growing haste and confusion*]. There's a wedding—overhead.

Gentleman in White [*with pointing finger*]. The Chief—or—?

Clerk. The Daughter—and the Officer.

Gentleman in White. Then, of course, he can't be seen at present—the Chief?

Clerk. We have no chief—*here*——

Gentleman in White [*switching round*]. Interesting! Assuming that you are not too deeply engaged in delicate calculations—the wage-schedules there——?

Clerk. We have no wage-schedules—*here!*

Gentleman in White. That piles up the interest. That touches the core of things. [*Pointing through the window.*] This gigantic establishment going full blast—and no chief—no wage-schedules——?

Clerk. We work—and we share!

Gentleman in White [*pointing to the wall*]. The diagrams? [*Rising and reading the tables.*] Three divisions. Up to thirty years, Scale One. Up to forty years, Scale Two. Over forty, Scale Three. A simple bit of arithmetic. Profit-sharing according to age. [*To* Clerk]. An invention of your Chief?—who refuses to be a chief?

Clerk. Because he does not wish to be richer than others!

Gentleman in White. Was he ever rich?

Clerk. He is the son of the Billionaire!

Gentleman in White [*smiling*]. So he advanced to the very periphery of wealth and then returned to its centre—to its core—And you work?

Clerk. Every man works to his utmost!

Gentleman in White. Because you get your share of the total earnings?

Clerk. Yes—and that's why we work harder here than anywhere else on earth!

Gentleman in White. I suppose you produce something worth such an effort?

Clerk. Gas!

The Gentleman in White [*blows through his hollowed hand*].

Clerk [*excited*]. Haven't you heard of the Gas we produce?

The Gentleman in White [*also shows excitement*].

Clerk. Coal-and-water-power are out of date. This new source of energy drives millions of machines at super-speed. We furnish the power. Our Gas feeds the industry of the entire world!

Gentleman in White [*at window*]. Day and night—fire and smoke?

Clerk. We have attained the acme of our achievement!

Gentleman in White [*returning*]. Because poverty is abolished?

Clerk. Our intensive efforts create—create!

Gentleman in White. Because profits are shared?

Clerk. Gas!

Gentleman in White. And suppose sometime the Gas—should——

Clerk. The work must go on—not a moment's pause! We are working for ourselves—not for the pockets of others. No loafing—no strikes. The work goes on without a pause. There will always be Gas!

Gentleman in White. And suppose sometime the Gas should—explode?

The Clerk [*stares at him*].

Gentleman in White. What then?

The Clerk [*is speechless*].

The Gentleman in White [*breathes the words directly into his face*]. The White Horror! [*Rising to full height and listening to sounds overhead*]. Music. [*Halting halfway to door.*] Valse. [*Trips out, silently.*]

Clerk [*in growing consternation, finally seizes telephone, almost screaming*]. *The Engineer!* [*His eyes dart back and forth between the doors to right and left.*]

[The Engineer *enters from right, wearing a frock-coat.*]

Engineer. What—

[A Workman *in white blouse comes in from the left, greatly excited.*]

Clerk [*pointing with outstretched arm at* Workman]. There——!

Engineer [*to* Workman]. Are you looking for me?

Workman [*surprised*]. I was just coming to report to you.

Engineer [*to* Clerk]. But you had already telephoned me!

Clerk. Because——

Engineer. Did you receive a report?

Clerk [*shakes his head and points to* Workman]. This man——

Engineer. Has just come.

Clerk.——was bound to come!

Engineer [*somehow disquieted*]. What has happened?

Workman. The Gas in the sight-tube shows colour.

Engineer. Colour!

Workman. It is still only a tinge.

Engineer. Growing deeper?

Workman. Visibly.

Engineer. What colour?

Workman. A light rose.

Engineer. Are you not mistaken?

Workman. I have been watching it carefully.

Engineer. How long?

Clerk [*impulsively*]. Ten minutes?

Workman. Yes.

Engineer. How do *you* know that?

Clerk. Wouldn't it be best to ring up—upstairs?

Engineer [*telephones*]. Engineer. Report from Central Station—sight-tube shows colour. I'll inspect personally. [*To* Workman.] Come along. [*Both go out.*]

Clerk [*suddenly throws up his arms, then runs out screaming*]. We're done for—we're done for [*From the right the* Billionaire's Son—*sixty years old—and the* Officer *in red uniform come in.*]

Officer. Is there any cause for serious alarm?

Billionaire's Son. I am waiting for the Engineer's report. Nevertheless, I am glad you are both going. I wanted to say a word about the fortune which my daughter is bringing you. [*Takes a note-book out of his writing-table*].

Officer. I thank you.

Billionaire's Son. You need not thank me. It is her mother's money. It ought to be considerable. I have no mind for such things.

Officer. An officer is forced——

Billionaire's Son. You love each other—I offered no objection.

Officer. I shall guard your daughter, whom you are confiding to my hands, as I would my own honour.

Billionaire's Son [*opening book*]. Here is the amount of the funds and where they are deposited. Select an efficient banker and take his advice. That is most necessary.

Officer [*reads, then in amazement*]. We shall certainly require a banker to manage all this!

Billionaire's Son. Because the capital is a large one? I did not mean it that way.

Officer. I do not understand.

Billionaire' Son. What you have now you have for the entire future. You must not expect anything from me. Not now and not later. I shall leave nothing. My principles are sufficiently well known—they must also be familiar to you.

Officer. It is not likely that we——

Billionaire's Son. No one can tell. As long as money is piled up, money will go, lost. Conditions based on money are always uncertain. I feel I must tell you this, so that later on I may feel no responsibility. You

have married the daughter of a workman—I am nothing more. I will not conceal from you the fact that I would rather that my daughter's mother had not left her a fortune. But I exercise authority only in my own province, and I never attempt to force anyone into this. Not even my daughter.

[THE DAUGHTER, *in travelling dress, comes in from the right.*]

Daughter. Why must we hurry off this way?

Officer [*kissing her hand*]. How warm you still are from the dance!

Billionaire's Son. I should not like the marriage-festival to end in a discord. [*They start.*] The danger can be, no doubt, averted. But it demands every possible effort.

Daughter [*at window*]. Below—in the works?

Billionaire's Son. I should not find time to say good-bye—later on.

Daughter. Is it so very serious?

Officer. Counter measures have been taken.

Billionaire's Son [*taking* DAUGHTER'S *hand*]. *Bon voyage.* Be happy. To-day you have laid aside my name. That is no loss. I am a man of plain tastes. I cannot approach the splendour of your new name. Must you and all you are be extinguished in me—now that you are going?

[THE DAUGHTER *looks at him questioningly.*]

Officer. How can you say that?

Billionaire's Son. I cannot follow you in your world—a world of fallacies.

Daughter. But I shall return.

Billionaire's Son. It is not likely that I can wait for a real return. [*Abruptly*]. I shall now ask the guests to leave. [*He kisses her forehead.* THE DAUGHTER *stands deeply moved. He clasps the* OFFICER'S *hand. The* OFFICER *leads the* DAUGHTER *out.*]

Billionaire's Son [*telephones*]. Tell the people in the drawing-room that a disturbance at the works necessitates bringing the festivities to a close. It is advisable to leave the vicinity as quickly as possible. [*The music ceases.*]

[*Enter* ENGINEER *from left. A working-coat over his dress suit. He is deeply agitated.*]

Engineer [*gasping*]. Report from Central Station—Gas colours deeper every second. In a few minutes—at the same rate of progress—it will be—a deep red!

Billionaire's Son. Is anything wrong with the engines?

Engineer. All working perfectly!

Billionaire's Son. Any trouble with the ingredients?

Engineer. All ingredients, all!—tested before mixing!

Billionaire's Son. Where does the fault lie?

Engineer [*shaking from top to toe*]. In—the formula!

Billionaire's Son. Your formula—does not—work out?

Engineer. My formula—does not—work out!

Billionaire's Son. Are you sure?

Engineer. Yes! *Now!*

Billionaire's Son. Have you found the mistake?

Engineer. No!

Billionaire's Son. Can't you find it?

Engineer. The calculation is—correct!

Billionaire's Son. And yet the sight-tubes show colour?

The Engineer [*throws himself into chair before desk and jerks his hand across sheet of paper.*]

Billionaire's Son. Have the alarms been set going?

Engineer [*without pausing in his work*]. All the bells are pounding away.

Billionaire's Son. Is there enough time to clear the works?

Engineer. The lorries are whizzing from door to door.

Billionaire's Son. In good order?

Engineer. In perfect order!

Billionaire's Son [*in terrible agitation*]. Will all get out?

Engineer [*leaping to his feet, standing erect before him*]. I have done my duty—the formula is clear—without a flaw!

Billionaire's Son [*stunned*]. You cannot find the error?

Engineer. Nobody can find it. Nobody! No brain could reckon more carefully. I've made the final calculation!

Billionaire's Son. And it does not work out?

Engineer. It works out—and does not work out. We have reached the limit—works out and does not work out. Figures fail us—works out—yet does not work out. The thing sums itself up, and then turns against us—works out and does not work out!

Billionaire's Son. The Gas——?

Engineer. It is bleeding in the sight-tube! Flooding past the formula—going red in the sight-glass. Floating out of the formula—

taking the bit in its own teeth. I have done my duty. My head is quite clear. The impossible is going to take place—it cannot come—yet it is coming!

Billionaire's Son [*feeling for a chair*]. We are helpless—delivered up to——

Engineer. The Explosion!

[*A terrible sibilance tears asunder the silence without. A grinding thunder bursts—the smoke-stacks crack and fall. A silence, empty and smokeless, ensues. The great glass windows rattle into the room in a cascade of fragments.*]

Billionaire's Son [*flattened against the wall—in a toneless voice*]. The earth swayed——

Engineer. Pressure of millions of atmospheres——

Billionaire's Son. All is silent—a grave.

Engineer. Immense radius of devastation——

Billionaire's Son. Who is still living?

[*The door to left is flung open. A* Workman*—naked—stained by the explosion totters in.*]

Workman. Report from Shed Eight—Central—white cat burst—red eyes torn open—yellow mouth gaping—humps up crackling back—grows round—snaps away girders—lifts up roof—bursts—sparks! sparks! [*Sitting down in the middle of floor and striking about him*]. Chase away the cat—Shoo! Shoo!—smash her jaws—Shoo! Shoo!—bury her eyes—they flame—hammer down her back—hammer it down—thousands of fists! It's swelling, swelling—growing fat—fatter—Gas out of every crack—every tube! [*Once more half erecting himself*]. Report from Central—the white cat has—exploded! [*He collapses and lies prone.*]

Billionaire's Son [*goes to him*].

The Workman [*gropes with his hand*].

Billionaire's Son [*takes his hand*].

Workman [*with a cry*]. Mother! [*Dies.*]

Billionaire's Son [*bending low above him*]. O man! O mankind!

ACT TWO

The same room. A green jalousie or blind has been let down over the great window. In front of this stands a long draughting-table covered with drawings.

The young Clerk*—with hair which has now grown snow-white—at his table, inactive.*

The Billionaire's Son *is leaning against the draughting-table.*

Billionaire's Son. How long since it happened?

Clerk. Just seventeen days ago to-day.

Billionaire's Son [*turning and looking at the window*]. Formerly great sheds stood there and thrust smoke-stacks against the heavens—belching a fiery breath. That was what we used to see behind this green shutter—not so?

Clerk. Everything pulverized to dust—in a few minutes.

Billionaire's Son. Are you sure it did not take place a thousand years ago?

Clerk. I shall never forget that day!

Billionaire's Son. Perhaps this day is already too far distant for you?

The Clerk [*looks at him questioningly*].

Billionaire's Son. That is to say—when you look at your hair?

Clerk. I was beside myself—it was almost hallucination. I felt it in my bones that it was coming. I saw Horror—saw it bodily. And that was worse—than what really happened! And I grew white before it really happened.

Billionaire's Son [*nodding*]. The White Horror—this was necessary in order to give us impetus—a powerful impetus—to fling us forward for a thousand years! Seventeen days, you say? Seventeen days full of peace and quiet.

Clerk [*in a matter-of-fact manner*]. The workmen still persist in their refusal.

Billionaire's Son. And I cannot employ them. The works have been levelled to the ground.

Clerk. They will not take up work before—

Billionaire's Son. Before I give my permission.

Clerk [*nonplussed*]. Are you postponing the rebuilding?

Billionaire's Son [*shaking his head*]. I am not postponing it——

Clerk. You are always at work upon the drawings.

Billionaire's Son [*bending over the draughting-table*]. I am measuring—and colouring——

Clerk. The whole world is in urgent need of Gas—the demand is imperative. The supplies will soon be exhausted. If the Gas should—come to an end——!

Billionaire's Son [*quickly erecting himself*]. Then I hold the fate of the world in my hands.

Clerk. You must grant the demands of the workmen—or else the most terrible catastrophe of all will come.

Billionaire's Son [*walks towards him and strokes his hair*]. A catastrophe you call it?—you youthful whitehead? *You* should have had your warning. It was terrible enough when everything went up in thunder about us here. Do you wish to return to the White Horror? Are your fingers itching to play at the same old game? Can't you be anything but a Clerk?

Clerk. I have my calling.

Billionaire's Son. Don't you feel the call—for something more important?

Clerk. I must earn my living.

Billionaire's Son. And what if this particular "must" should be done away with?

Clerk. I am a Clerk.

Billionaire's Son. From the crown of your head to the sole of your feet?

Clerk. I —am a Clerk.

Billionaire's Son. Because you have always been a Clerk?

Clerk. It is—my calling.

Billionaire's Son [*smiling*]. Ah, it has buried you deep indeed. The strata of society are carried upon you—layer by layer. Nothing less than an exploding volcano will bring you to the surface—nothing less than this can teach you to rise.

[*Three* WORKMEN *enter from the left.*]

Billionaire's Son [*addressing them*]. Have you once more come stamping through the debris? I have not yet been able to send you my reply. The thing is still taking shape—I am up to the ears in sketches and calculations—look here! But I can make you a definite proposal if you will grant me a final time limit. Are you willing?

First Workman. The excitement——

Billionaire's Son. I understand. There were many victims—I do not dare to think of how many victims the accident claimed. [*Clasping his head with his hands.*] And yet I must keep them clearly before me. My decision will then be clear. Speak.

First Workman. We are merely making the same demand which we have always made.

Billionaire's Son. I know what it is. I am revolving it in my mind. I am taking it as the basis of my—— [*Abruptly.*] I am supposed to send away the Engineer?

First Workman. There is still time—today.

Billionaire's Son. And to-morrow?

First Workman. To-morrow we would refuse to take up work for a period of twenty weeks.

Billionaire's Son. Leaving the wreckage lie?

First Workman. In case of a settlement the works could be set going again—in twenty weeks.

Second Workman. The world's supply of Gas will not last longer than twenty weeks.

Third Workman. There will be a world-wide holiday.

Billionaire's Son . . . Why should I let the Engineer go? [*The* WORKMEN *are silent.*] Where lies his fault? Did the safety appliances fail to work? Even in a slight degree? Were the alarm signals incomplete? In making concessions to you, I must also be just to him. That is no more than right.

Third Workman. The Gas exploded.

Billionaire's Son. Was it his fault? No. The formula was correct. It is still correct.

First Workman. The Explosion came.

Billionaire's Son. According to its own laws. Not his.

Second Workman. He made the formula.

Billionaire's Son. No man could make a safer one!

[*The three* WORKMEN *are silent.*]

First Workman. The Engineer must go!

Second Workman. He must go to-day!

Third Workman. His going must be announced at once!

First Workman. We must take this announcement back with us.

Billionaire's Son. Must you have your sacrifice? Is that everything? Do you think that you can thereby silence the dead who call aloud in you? Do you think that you can strangle that which clamours in your blood? Can you hide a field of corpses under new corpses? Are you entangled in this horrible lust of revenge after all the horrors which have been? Is this the fruit of the fiery tree which rained pitch and brimstone upon us?

First Workman. There is also this—we can no longer be responsible for the attitude of the workers.

Second Workman. There is a fermentation —which is growing.

Third Workman. There will be an outbreak.

Billionaire's Son [*violently*]. Tell them—all, all of them—that they have ears to hear and a brain to reason with. The thing passed beyond the limits of the human. The brain of the Engineer had calculated everything to

the utmost. But beyond this there rule forces which suffer no rule. The flaw lies in eternity. Impossible to find by mortal means. The formula tallies—yet the Gas explodes. Can you not understand?

First Workman. We have our orders.

Billionaire's Son. Will you also assume the responsibility?

First Workman. For what?

Billionaire's Son. If I grant your demand—if I let the Engineer go—and you return to work——

First Workman. We'll pledge ourselves to that.

Billionaire's Son. And you will make Gas?

Second and *Third Workman.* Gas!

Billionaire's Son. The formula will be used?

First Workman [*hesitating*]. If it is correct ——

Billionaire's Son. Incontrovertibly so!

Second Workman. It is correct and ——

Billionaire's Son. And the Gas exploded.

[*The three* WORKMEN *are silent.*]

Billionaire's Son. And, therefore, must not the Engineer remain?

[*The three* WORKMEN *stare in front of them.*]

Billionaire's Son. Is not my refusal a safeguard against horror? Am I not keeping a door shut, a door behind which hell is smouldering? A door which leaves no way open to life? It is like a burning cul-de-sac. Who would go into a cul-de-sac? and lose sight of his goal? Who would be such a fool as to batter his forehead against the last wall and say: I have reached the end. He has reached the end, it is true, but this end is Annihilation. Turn back! turn back! you have heard the warning thundered from the heavens—it rent the air and came crashing down upon us. Turn back! turn back!

First Workman [*erecting himself*]. We must work!

Second Workman. And our work is here!

Third Workman. We are workers!

Billionaire's Son. You are workers—indefatigably so. Caught up in the maelstrom of the ultimate effort. Immeasurably enthusiastic over all this. [*Pointing to the charts and tables.*] There we have the mad chase—all the diagrams. Your work—and your wages in the hollow of your hands. That cheers you up—that spurs you on beyond even profit—that makes you work for work's sake. It is like an outbreak of fever, and it clouds the senses. Work—work—a wedge that is driven forward and which bores because it bores. To what end? I bore because I bore—I was a borer—I am a borer—and I remain a borer! Doesn't this make you shiver? Shiver at thought of the mutilation you inflict upon yourselves? You living, sentient, wonderful beings—you manifold ones—you men!

First Workman. We must take back a clear reply.

Billionaire's Son. I have given you one. But you do not yet understand. And it is also new to me—to me who feel my way so slowly and carefully.

Second Workman. Is the Engineer going?

Billionaire's Son. He is going.

Third Workman. To-day?

Billionaire's Son. He is not going!

First Workman. We do not understand.

Billionaire's Son. He goes—and he remains—the Engineer must become a matter of utter indifference to us.

Second Workman. What does this mean?

Billionaire's Son. That is still a small and precious secret of mine. I shall reveal it to you—later on. Look at those plans—I did not finish them—because the help I need is not yet at hand—and this help I can obtain only from the man who is and is not your enemy.

First Workman. May we give a definite answer to our fellows out there?

Billionaire's Son. Whatever you please. I will carry out everything—and more than you can promise your fellows out there. So now you may depart—in contentment.

[*The three* WORKMEN *go out.* BILLIONAIRE'S SON *bends over the drawings on the draughting-table.*]

Clerk [*leaping up from his chair, hurriedly*]. I—am going!

Billionaire's Son [*rises to an erect position*].

Clerk. I am—out of work.

Billionaire's Son. For the present.

Clerk. But there will be no change!

Billionaire's Son. Visions again? But of a somewhat darker shade this time? No mirage with a green oasis rising from the desert? Prophesy, my young prophetic friend. You have a most peculiar gift. I am curious to hear your prophecies.

Clerk. I—there is nothing more to write about.

Billionaire's Son. Can nothing tempt you?

Are you not eager for health? Would you not like to work with both hands, instead of this right hand of yours which does nothing but write? you with the lamed left?

Clerk. I—am going!

Billionaire's Son. Whither?

Clerk. To the others!

Billionaire's Son. Gather together and growl before the gates. The wheels are still spinning in your breasts—the urge is still too great. It will require time before inertia can set in. And then I'll admit you all.

[CLERK *goes out to the right.* BILLIONAIRE'S SON *once more at the draughting-table. Enter* ENGINEER *from the left.*]

Billionaire's Son [*looks up and regards him quizzically.* No damage? in body or clothes?

[ENGINEER *looks at him questioningly.*]

Billionaire's Son. Are you not the scapegoat who is to be impaled on his own horns? Haven't they beaten you yet?

Engineer. I heard them hissing.

Billionaire's Son. That was only the signal for the bleeding sacrifice—the slaughter takes place to-morrow.

Engineer. I know that I am free of carelessness—or incapacity.

Billionaire's Son. But they are after your scalp.

Engineer. These people ought to be shown ——

Billionaire's Son. . . . That a proof is clear and yet is not clear.

Engineer. I cannot leave—it would be like a confession of guilt ——

Billionaire's Son. Could I not discharge you?

Engineer. No! For you would then brand me with the mark—which makes me an outcast.

Billionaire's Son. One must suffer for many.

Engineer [*excitedly*]. Yes—if one would serve the advantage of the many. But where is the advantage here? Take this man or that man and put him in my place—the formula remains valid—must remain so. He must reckon with human reason, and human reason reckons only in this way. Or you must make Gas by means of a weaker formula.

Billionaire's Son. Do you believe in a weaker formula?

Engineer. All the machinery of the world would have to be rebuilt.

Billionaire's Son. That would not prevent its coming to pass.

Engineer. Facing the necessity of an inferior motive power ——

Billionaire's Son. The machines might be stopped—but not men.

Engineer. But after they have learned the danger?

Billionaire's Son. And no matter if they were blown up ten times, they would establish themselves in the burning zone for the eleventh time.

Engineer. An explosion such as this ——

Billionaire's Son. Will bring them to their senses, you think? Has it had any influence upon the fever which makes them rave? They are already clamouring out there: hand the Engineer over to us—and then we'll speed on again—out of one explosion into another explosion.

Engineer. And, therefore, my leaving is senseless.

Billionaire's Son [*smiling craftily*]. It would be an unparalleled stupidity! They would merely come jumping into the witches' cauldron once more—the rogues. The gates must be blocked, and I intend to use you for that purpose. I am powerful, now that I am going to keep you by me.

Engineer [*stroking his forehead*]. But, what are you going ——

Billionaire's Son. Come here. [*He takes him to the draughting-table.*] Do you see this? Sketches—rough sketches. The first draft of a new project. Merely hints of something big, something momentous—the first sketches.

Engineer. What is that?

Billionaire's Son. Don't you recognize the land?

Engineer. The plant?

Billionaire's Son. Has been levelled to the ground.

Engineer. Are these the new sheds?

Billionaire's Son. What! of such ridiculous dimensions!

Engineer. Are these yards?

Billionaire's Son. The coloured circles?

Engineer. Are these railway tracks?

Billionaire's Son. These green lines? (*The* ENGINEER *stares at the plans.*] Can't you guess? Have you no suspicions? You sly duck! You feeder on figures! Are you puzzled by this many-coloured riddle? You are blind—colour-blind from the eternal monotony of your doings—up to this very day. Now

a new day is born to greet you, and smiles upon you like springtime. Open your eyes and let them sweep over this domain. The vari-coloured earth is all about you [*pointing to the plans.*] The green lines—streets bordered by trees. The red, the yellow, the blue circles—open spaces full of flowering plants, sprouting from smooth lawns. The squares—houses, human dwellings with a small holding of land—shelters. Mighty streets go forth here—penetrating, conquering other domains, great roads trodden by pilgrims, our pilgrims, who shall preach simplicity—to us—to all! [*His gestures are grandiose.*]

Engineer [*puzzled*]. Do you intend to rebuild the plant—somewhere? ——

Billionaire's Son. It buried itself. It reached its apex and then collapsed. And that is why we are discharged—you and I and all the others—discharged with clear consciences. We went our way to the very end without fear—and now we turn aside. It is no more than our right—our honest right.

Engineer. The reconstruction—is doubtful?

Billionaire's Son [*patting the plans with his hand*]. The decision is here and it is *against* reconstruction.

Engineer. And the Gas—which can be made only here?

Billionaire's Son. The Gas exploded.

Engineer. The workmen?

Billionaire's Son. Homesteaders—each on his patch of green.

Engineer. That—is—impossible!

Billionaire's Son. Do you object to my plans? I told you that they were incomplete. I have counted upon you to help me carry them out. I am counting greatly upon your help. There is no other man so capable of carrying out a big project as yourself. I have the deepest confidence in you. Shall we proceed to work? [*He draws up a stool to the draughting-table and sits down.*]

Engineer [*making a few steps backward*]. But I am an Engineer!

Billionaire's Son. You will find excellent use for your capacities here.

Engineer. That is not—my branch.

Billionaire's Son. All branches are united in this.

Engineer. I cannot undertake such a task.

Billionaire's Son. Is it too difficult for you?

Engineer. Too—pitiful!

Billionaire's Son [*rising*]. That do you say? You think this trivial—you with your genius for figures! Are you the slave of your calculations? Are you fettered to those girders which you constructed? Have you delivered up your arms and legs, your blood and your senses to this frame which you devised? Are you a diagram covered with a skin? [*He reaches out for him.*] Where are *you?* Your human warmth? your beating pulse? your sense of shame?

Engineer. If I cannot be occupied—in my own line ——

Billionaire's Son. Your hands should muzzle your mouth—for it is talking murder.

Engineer. . . . Then I must ask for my dismissal.

Billionaire's Son [*supporting himself against the table*]. No! *that* will bring back the others. The road would be clear and they would come storming back, and build up their hell again—and the fever will continue to rage. Help me! stay by me! Work here with me—here where I am working.

Engineer. I am dismissed!

[Billionaire's Son *regards him speechlessly.* Engineer *goes out to the right.*]

Billionaire's Son [*strong at last*]. Then I must force, must force you—every one of you!

ACT THREE

An oval room. There is a high wainscot of white-enamelled wood. In this there are two invisible doors, two at the rear—one to the left. In the centre there is a small round table covered with a green cloth. This is surrounded by six chairs, close together.

The Officer *enters from the left—in a military cape. He can scarcely control his emotion. He looks for the doors, taps parts of the wainscot.*

The Billionaire's Son *enters from the left, to the rear.*

Officer [*turning swiftly about and advancing*]. Am I disturbing you?

Billionaire's Son [*astonished*]. Have you two come back?

Officer. No, I've come back alone.

Billionaire's Son. Where is your wife?

Officer. She—was not able to accompany me.

Billionaire's Son. Is she ill—my daughter?

Officer. She—does not know I've come here!

Billionaire's Son [*nodding*]. The looks of

things here are certainly far from edifying. The paternal foundation is now only a mass of ruins. Would you like to have a look around?

Officer [*hastily*]. The catastrophe must have been terrible. I suppose the rebuilding is going ahead at a good pace?

Billionaire's Son. Have you noticed anything of the sort going on?

Officer. It is natural—and you must be immensely busy.

Billionaire's Son [*shaking his head*]. My time ——

Officer. You are more than busy. The work is more than you can manage. [*Pointing to the table.*] There is going to be a meeting. I am sorry to be forced to disturb you. [*Suddenly, almost abrupily.*] But I must ask you to give me a little of your time—now!

Billionaire's Son. All things are equally important to me.

Officer. I thank you for your willingness to hear me. The matter concerns me—concerns my salvation, my rescue ——

Billionaire's Son. Salvation? rescue? from what?

Officer. From being cashiered from the regiment—in disgrace.

Billionaire's Son. Why?

Officer. I've contracted debts—at cards—debts of honour. And I must pay them by tomorrow noon.

Billionaire's Son. Can't you pay them?

Officer. No!

Billionaire's Son. If it is necessary—draw upon your fortune—your wife's dowry.

Officer. That—no longer exists.

Billionaire's Son. What has become of it?

Officer [*excitedly*]. I played and I lost. I tried to cover the losses and began to speculate. The speculations were a failure and involved great losses. I increased my stakes at the table beyond my means—and if I cannot pay—I—must—blow—out—my brains!

Billionaire's Son [*after a pause*]. And so your final way leads you to me?

Officer. It cost me a great effort to come here—to you—who have confided in me, and whom I have deceived. But despair drives me to you. I deserve your reproaches—all the blame you can pour upon me is just blame. I have nothing to say in my defence.

Billionaire's Son. I do not reproach you.

Officer [*reaching for his hand*]. I am shamed by your goodness—your forgiveness. I swear that—once I get out of this safely—I ——

Billionaire's Son. I do not wish you to swear ——

Officer. Then I will pledge myself ——

Billionaire's Son. Because I cannot do you a service ——

Officer [*stares at him*]. Will you not ——

Billionaire's Son. I cannot help—even though I would. I told you at the time that you were marrying the daughter of a workman. I am that workman. I hid nothing from you. I gave you a clear idea of everything.

Officer. Means are everywhere at your disposal!

Billionaire's Son. No.

Officer. A word from you— and every bank is at your service.

Billionaire's Son. No longer to-day.

Officer. The great plant—surely that will be working again in a few weeks ——

Billionaire's Son. It will be standing still!

Officer. Still ——?

Billionaire's Son. Yes, I have come to other conclusions. Will you help me? I need help—much help. The great stronghold of error cannot be toppled over by one man alone—a thousand hands must help to shake it.

Officer [*bewildered*]. You will not help ——?

Billionaire's Son. I am myself in need. A good wind brings you hither. You are a debtor—as I am a debtor. And we are both guiltless. But now lips are loosened and accusations pour forth—accusations against all of us.

Officer [*clutching his head with his hands*]. I—can—not—think ——

Billionaire's Son. Take off that gaudy uniform and put aside your sword. You are a good man—for did not my daughter become your wife? You are sound at heart. Whence came this shadow? Whence all that hides and covers up your real self? How did you succumb to this temptation for show?

Officer. What!—you expect me to give up my career as an officer ——?

Billionaire's Son. Confess your fault—and prove your guiltlessness. See that you win the eyes and ears of men—see that your voice carries farther and farther. I myself cannot realise myself—I remain disguised for life in this coat. And so the currents of the great forces in me are turned awry—turned into a canal full of deeds undone—because one deed still threatens—a deed which will bring annihilation in its train. I would save those who

would bring about something which can only bring about ruin.

Officer [*suppressing a groan*]. Can—you help me?

Billionaire's Son. Yes!

Officer. Then give me ——!

Billionaire's Son. That which *you* give me I could never pay for.

Officer. My period of grace is expiring.

Billionaire's Son. No, it will go on for ever.

Officer. Money!

Billionaire's Son. Ought I to cheat you with money—cheat you out of your real self?

Officer [*in desperation*]. I must leave the Service—I shall be struck off the Rolls—I—

Billionaire's Son [*leading him towards the door with his arm about his shoulder*]. Yes, no doubt there will be a sensation, should I abandon you. You, my son-in-law, and I with the most abundant means at my disposal. And yet I did nothing, they will say. That will arouse their attention—they will become most attentive listeners. I need good listeners . . . and you will help me to get them. That will be your service. And praise shall be ours—even without my recognition. But my recognition will not fail.

[*The* Officer *goes out.*]

[Billionaire's Son *steps up to the table, passes his hand over the green cloth—nods—and then goes out behind to the left.*]

[*The* First Gentleman in Black *enters from the left. A massive head with short bristles of gray hair rises above the closely-buttoned black frock-coat.*]

[*The* Second Gentleman in Black *enters—he is bald—and his costume, like that of all following him, resembles that of the* First.]

Second Gentleman in Black. How are things at your place?

First Gentleman in Black. Not a finger moving.

Second Gentleman in Black. The same thing at my place.

[*Enter* Third Gentleman in Black—*with blonde pointed beard.*]

Third Gentleman in Black [*to the* First]. How are things at your place?

First Gentleman in Black. Not a finger moving.

Third Gentleman in Black [*to* Second]. And with you?

[Second Gentleman in Black *shakes his head.*]

Third Gentleman in Black. The same with me.

[*The* Fourth *and the* Fifth Gentleman in Black *enter—two brothers closely resembling each other, about thirty.*]

Fourth Gentleman in Black [*to the* First]. How are things at your place?

Fifth Gentleman in Black [*to* Second]. How are things with you?

Third Gentleman in Black [*to both*]. How are things with you?

Fourth and *Fifth Gentlemen in Black.* Not a finger moving!

First Gentleman in Black. The same with us.

Second Gentleman in Black. This is the most tremendous stoppage of work I have ever experienced.

Fifth Gentleman in Black. And what is the cause?

Third Gentleman in Black. Our workmen are striking in sympathy with these men here.

Fifth Gentleman in Black. Why are they striking?

Second Gentleman in Black. Because the Engineer has not been discharged.

Fifth Gentleman in Black. Why is he kept on?

Second Gentleman in Black. Yes, why?

Fourth Gentleman in Black. Because of a mere whim!

Third Gentleman in Black. Just so!

First Gentleman in Black. There may be another reason. A reason based on principle. They demand the dismissal of the Engineer—that gives them something to fight about—furnishes a difficulty—a stumbling-block. If the workers make demands upon us—we must oppose these demands—unconditionally. That has been the case here—and, therefore, the Engineer keeps his post!

Third Gentleman in Black. But you forget that he is not one of us.

Fourth Gentleman in Black. It is another whim—of our friends—just like the first.

Second Gentleman in Black. And just as dangerous as the other. You will see!

Second Gentleman in Black. It is to be hoped that it is not more dangerous!

Third Gentleman in Black. I am of the opinion it could not be worse.

Second Gentleman in Black. This one affair causes us enough trouble!

Fourth Gentleman in Black. The whole body of workers has its eyes on these works!

Fifth Gentleman in Black. This sharing of profits with everybody causes unrest in all the other syndicates.

Second Gentleman in Black. An ulcer which ought to be burnt out!

Third Gentleman in Black. With fire and brimstone!

First Gentleman in Black. But you must not overlook the results which have been attained on the basis of this method. The sharing of profits has brought about the highest intensification of production, and this has brought about the most powerful of all products—Gas!

Second Gentleman in Black. Yes—Gas!

Third Gentleman in Black. Gas!

Fifth Gentleman in Black. At any rate we need Gas.

Fourth Gentleman in Black. Under all circumstances.

Third Gentleman in Black. We must present our demand: the dismissal of the Engineer.

Second Gentleman in Black. Quite independently of the workmen!

Fifth Gentleman in Black. Quite independently of the workmen.

Fourth Gentleman in Black. That saves our faces!

Third Gentleman in Black. Have you got the order of business?

Fourth Gentleman in Black [*at the table*]. Nothing on hand here.

First Gentleman in Black. We have only this point to consider. Are we of one mind?

[*The other* GENTLEMEN IN BLACK *shake his hand in agreement.*]

[*Enter the* SON OF THE BILLIONAIRE *from the left to the rear. He points to the chairs, upon which the* GENTLEMEN IN BLACK *quickly seat themselves. The* SON OF THE BILLIONAIRE *seats himself last, between the* FOURTH *and* FIFTH GENTLEMEN IN BLACK.]

Fifth Gentleman in Black. Who will take down the minutes?

Billionaire's Son. No, no, let there be no minutes.

Third Gentleman in Black. A meeting and no minutes!

Billionaire's Son. Yes, yes, we'll have an open discussion.

First Gentleman in Black. Considering the importance of the matter I hold it as absolutely necessary that—in all cases our independence of a similar demand by the Workmen be ——

Second Gentleman in Black. I move that the minutes of the meeting be published!

Third Gentleman in Black. Let us vote upon that.

First Gentleman in Black. Those who are for ——

[*The* GENTLEMEN IN BLACK *each fling up an arm with a vigorous gesture.*]

Billionaire's Son [*forcing down the arms of the* FOURTH *and* FIFTH GENTLEMEN IN BLACK]. Not all against one—that would make me too powerful. That would be coercing you—and I wish only to persuade you.

First Gentleman in Black. If our negotiations ——

Billionaire's Son. Do you wish to negotiate with me? Are you the workmen? Are you not the masters? the employers?

Third Gentleman in Black. You have invited us without drawing up the order of business for the day. We conclude from this that you wish us to draw up this order ourselves. That, surely, is a just conclusion. We have agreed and are unanimous upon one point.

Second Gentleman in Black. I think the discussion will be brief, and that we had better return to our own plants.

Fourth Gentleman in Black. It is high time that we begin work once more.

Fifth Gentleman in Black. The first night-shift will begin work this evening.

Third Gentleman in Black. There are losses which can never be made good.

Billionaire's Son. Losses? You have had losses? What have *you* lost?

The Gentlemen in Black [*together*]. No work is going on—the plants are lying still—the workmen are on strike!

Billionaire's Son [*lifting up a hand*]. I know; they are holding funeral exercises. Surely they have good reason. Were not thousands—burnt?

First Gentleman in Black. The strike is quite a different motive.

Billionaire's Son. No, no! You must not listen to their speeches. These are senseless. What would you say when I tell you that they demand the dismissal of the Engineer? Isn't that a sign of their muddled minds? No, they do not know out there what they are doing.

[The Gentlemen in Black *look at him in perplexity.*]

Billionaire's Son. Is the Engineer guilty, and must he do penance by resigning? Was his formula bad? It stood the test before—and it stands the test now. Upon what pretext could I send him away?

Second Gentleman in Black [*nodding*]. The formula has been tested ——

Third Gentleman in Black [*also nodding*]. Its validity has been proved ——

Fourth Gentleman in Black [*also nodding*]. It is the formula ——

Fifth Gentleman in Black [*also nodding*]. For Gas!

Billionaire's Son. Do you really realise this?

First Gentleman in Black. And for that reason it may be applied by any Engineer.

Second Gentleman in Black. This or that one.

Fourth Gentleman in Black. The Engineer is a mere side-issue.

Fifth Gentleman in Black. A new Engineer —and the same old formula!

Third Gentleman in Black. And thereby the strike comes to an end.

First Gentleman in Black. We are assembled here to present our demands—the dismissal of the Engineer!

Billionaire's Son [*staring*]. ——Have you forgotten—are you still deaf—is the thunder and the crashing no longer rolling in your ears—are you no longer shaken upon your seats—are you paralyzed?

Second Gentleman in Black. The catastrophe is a dark page ——

Fourth Gentleman in Black. We book it to profit and loss ——

Fifth Gentleman in Black. And turn over a new leaf!

Billionaire s Son. The same formula!

First Gentleman in Black. We hope ——

Second Gentleman in Black. Naturally!

Billionaire's Son. The same formula ——?

Third Gentleman in Black. Perhaps there will be a longer interval between the ——

Fourth Gentleman in Black. One must gain experience!

Billionaire's Son. Twice—thrice ——?

Fifth Gentleman in Black. We shall know when to expect the next ——

Second Gentleman in Black. It is not likely that we shall live to see it.

Billionaire's Son. I am to let them in — surrender ——?

First Gentleman in Black. After all, the industry of the entire world cannot be permitted to stand still.

Third Gentleman in Black. It is entirely dependent upon Gas!

Billionaire's Son. Is it that? Am I the source of energy which sets all this in motion? Is my power as vast as that?

[*The* Gentlemen in Black *regard him in amazement.*]

Billionaire's Son. My voice is mighty—mightier than horror and joy! Does the choice between being and non-being depend upon my word? Does the yes or the no which my lips may speak determine Life—or Annihilation—? [*Lifting his hands.*] I say—no!—no!—no!—A human being decides—as a human being only can decide, no!—no!—no!

[*The* Gentlemen in Black *look at one another.*]

Fourth Gentleman in Black. That ——

Fifth Gentleman in Black. ——is ——

Third Gentleman in Black. —— really ——

Second Gentleman in Black. What—is—the ——

Billionaire's Son. The wreckage lies there—and above the wreckage there is new soil—layer upon layer—the growth of the earth in a new garment—the eternal law of Becoming.

First Gentleman in Black. What does this mean?

Billionaire's Son. Never again shall smokestacks belch here! Never again shall machines pound and hammer. Never again shall the cry of the doomed be mingled with the—unavoidable—Explosion.

Second Gentleman in Black. The plant ——

Third Gentleman in Black. The reconstruction ——

First Gentleman in Black. Gas?

Billionaire's Son. No reconstruction!—no plant!—no Gas! I will not take the responsibility upon myself—no man can take it upon himself!

First Gentleman in Black. We are ——

Third Gentleman in Black. ——to do without ——

Fifth Gentleman in Black. ——Gas?

Billionaire's Son. Without human sacrifices!

Second Gentleman in Black. We have established everything upon a basis ——

The Other Gentleman in Black. —— of Gas!

Billionaire's Son. Invent a better Gas—or make shift with an inferior one!

First Gentleman in Black. This is monstrous. We unqualifiedly reject all such imputations. What does it mean?—nothing less than a transformation of our entire plants——

Fourth Gentleman in Black. The costs would be ruinous!

Third Gentleman in Black. It is not a matter of costs—even if these should bankrupt some of us. What I ask is this: shall the production of the world be reduced?

Fifth Gentleman in Black. And that is why you must produce Gas. It is your duty. Now, if we had not had your Gas ——

Second Gentleman in Black. You have brought about the highest development of modern mechanics. And now you must continue to supply Gas!

First Gentleman in Black. By means of your advanced and fruitful methods which give your workmen a share in the profits, you have achieved this great finality—Gas. And that is why we tolerated this method—and now we demand Gas!

Billionaire's Son. The method is indeed fruitful—as I have discovered. But I have merely gone these ways a little sooner than yourselves. Sometime or other you must all follow—the wages of all to be shared by all.

Fifth Gentleman in Black. This formula should not have been invented—if there was any likelihood that the making of Gas was to be suspended sometime or other!

Billionaire's Son. The invention was necessary—for the fever for work possessed the world. It raged blindly, and flooded all the frontiers of life.

First Gentleman in Black. A reduction of the speed to which we have been accustomed could not be enforced.

Billionaire's Son. No, I do not counsel a return to a feebler, slower movement. We must go on—leaving only the finished, perfect thing behind us—or we should be unworthy of our task. We must not succumb to cowardice. We are men—human beings imbued with a mighty courage. Have we not once more shown this courage? Did we not bravely exhaust every possibility?—It was only after we saw dead men by the thousands lying about us, that we struck out for new fields. Have we not once more tested the elements of our power and driven it to extremes merely to know how much power we enjoyed—to fetter the whole—to fetter mankind? Surely our pilgrimage goes towards mankind—epoch upon epoch—one epoch closes to-day so that the other may open—perhaps the last of all.

Second Gentleman in Black. . . . Do you really intend to stop all production?

Billionaire's Son. Man is the measure for me—and the needs that uphold him.

Third Gentleman in Black. We have other needs.

Billionaire's Son. As long as we exhaust man in other ways.

Fourth Gentleman in Black. Do you wish to gull us?

Fifth Gentleman in Black. With pamphlets?

Billionaire's Son. I will set an example—establish it on my own land—there will be small domains for all of us in the midst of green promenades.

First Gentleman in Black. What! you are going to cut up the most valuable tract of land in the world—for *such* a purpose!

Billionaire's Son. The purpose—is Man!

Third Gentleman in Black. You must have command of great means, for the world takes account only of—money.

Billionaire's Son. Our former profits will suffice for such a period as will be necessary before our new enterprise can take root and grow.

Fourth Gentleman in Black. You would have to wait long before you found any imitators.

Billionaire's Son. And what if there should be no Gas for you?

[*The* Gentlemen in Black *are silent.*]

Billionaire's Son. I could force you—as you see—but I do not wish to force you. It would offend you—and I have need of your help. Here we are—six of us seated about this table—let us say the six of us get up and go forth, and our voices become a sextuple thunder which all men must hear. The dullest, deafest ear would hear our message, under this sixfold pressure. You are the great ones of the earth—Labour's Great Gentlemen in Black—arise and come forth and we shall proclaim that the fulness of time has fulfilled itself—and tell it again and again to them who will not understand, because the whirlwind which shook them until yesterday is still in their blood. Arise—go forth!!

First Gentleman in Black [*after a pause, during which he looks about the table, exchanging glances*]. Are we unanimous? [*The* Gentlemen in black *fling up their right hands.*] We will set a time-limit—until this evening. If

we are not informed by then that the Engineer has been dismissed, we shall apply to the Government. We bid you good-day.

[*The* GENTLEMEN IN BLACK *go out.*]

Billionaire's Son. [*seated at the table, rubbing his hand slowly across the green cloth, murmuring*]. No —— no —— no —— no —— no—!

[*Enter the* OFFICER *in extreme perturbation—from the left.*

Officer [*unbuckling his sword and about to lay it on the table. But he halts, and feversihly buckles the sword on again*]. I ——cannot —— do —— it —— I —— cannot! [*He draws a revolver, places it against his breast, stalks slowly out, step by step. As the door closes, a shot is heard.*]

Billionaire's Son [*rising, staring towards the door*]. The world is out of joint—let others force it back again!

ACT FOUR

A great circular hall of concrete, the upper part vague and nebulous. From the cupola of this hall a cone of light from a hidden arc lamp falls through dusk and dust, a mysterious illumination.

In the centre, directly under this lamp, there is a steep, small, pulpit-like platform of iron, with two winding stairs.

Workmen are assembled, there are many women. Stillness reigns. The Speakers in alternation appear suddenly upon the platform, almost as from a trapdoor.

Voices [*rapidly swelling*]. Who?

Girl [*with upraised arms*]. I! [*Stillness.*]

Girl. I'll tell you of my brother!—I no longer knew I had a brother. Someone left the house in the morning and came home at night—and slept. Or he left the house at night and came back in the morning—and slept. One of his hands was large—the other small. The large hand never slept. It kept making the same movement—day and night. This hand ate up his body and sucked up all his strength. This hand grew to be the whole man!—What was left of my brother? My brother who used to play beside me—who made sand-castles with his two hands?—He plunged into work. And this work needed only one hand—one hand that lifted and depressed the lever—minute after minute—up and down, to the very second! He never missed a stroke—the lever was always true—always exact. And he stood in front of it and served it like a dead man. He never made a mistake—never missed a count. His hand obeyed his head and his head belonged to his hand!—And that was all that was left of my brother!—Was this really all that was left?—Then one day at noon—*It* came! Rivers of fire shot out of every crack and cranny! And the explosion ate up the hand of my brother. And so my brother gave up his all!—Is that too little?—Did my brother dicker about the price when they hired his hand to lift that lever? Did he not suppress all that had made him my brother—and turned him into a mere hand?—And did he not at last pay for his hand too?—Is the pay too little—to ask for the Engineer?—My brother is my voice—do not work before the Engineer is forced to leave!—Do not work—you hear my brother's voice! [*Bending over towards them.*]

Girl [*crowding up from below*]. And it is *my* brother's voice!

[*The* GIRL *descends into the Crowd. Stillness.*]

Voices [*swelling forth anew*]. Who?

[*A* MOTHER *stands on the platform.*]

Mother. I! [*Stillness.*]

Mother. A Mother's son was ground to pieces by the Explosion! What is a Son? What was it the fire killed? My son?—I did not know my son any more—for I had buried him long ago—the first morning that he went to the works.—Are two eyes that had a fixed stare from looking at the sight-tube—are they a son?—Where was my child—that I had born with a mouth to laugh—with limbs to play? My child—that threw its arms about my neck and kissed me from behind? My child?—I am a Mother, and know that what is born in pain is lost in sorrow. I am a Mother—I do not groan over this. I stifle the cry on my lips—I choke it down. I am a Mother—I do not strike—I do not accuse—not I—it is my child that calls—here! I gave it birth—and now it comes back into my womb—dead!—from Mother to Mother! I have my son again! I feel his throbbing in my blood! I feel him tearing at my tongue—I feel him crying, crying: Mother! Where have you been so long? Mother! you were not by me—Mother! you left me alone so soon—Mother! you did not smash the sight-tube—and it was no longer than a finger and as thin as a fly's wing.—Why did he not crush it himself?—one touch had done it.—

Why was his will so weak—and all his strength gone into his staring eyes? Why did the flames put out his eyes? Why? Why? Must he do everything—and demand nothing? What does it all mean compared to his loss? Here, look! a Mother—and there, look! the Engineer!

[WOMEN *crowd closely about the foot of the platform.*]

Women. It is our son!

Mother. Mothers and Mothers and Mothers you!—— sons cry out in you—do not strangle their cries; stay away from the works—stay away from the works—there is the Engineer.

Women. Stay away from the works!

[MOTHER *descends from the platform and mingles with the* WOMEN.]

[*Stillness.*]

Voices [*loudly*]. Who?

Woman [*upon the platform*]. I!

[*Stillness.*]

Woman. We had our wedding—one day. A piano played—it was in the afternoon. Everybody danced about the rooms. A whole day was ours—morning—noon—and night. My man, my fine big man, was with me one whole day. One day from morning till night. His life lasted a whole day!—Is that too much? Because a day has morning—and noon—and evening? And the night? Is that too long for a man's life?—It is wonderfully long—twenty-four hours—and a wedding! A wedding and twenty-four hours—and a piano—and dancing—don't these make up a life? What does a man expect? To live *two* whole days? What a time!—an eternity! The sun would grow tired of shining upon him! We only get a wedding once—but the iron car rolls on for ever. Forwards and backwards—backwards—and forwards—and the man goes with it—always with it—because the man is part of the foot. Only his foot is important—his foot operates the block-switch—making the car go and halt—and the foot works, works almost without the man that travels with it. If only the foot were not so closely tied to the man! The man would have a chance to live—but his foot pins him to the car which rolls back and rolls forward—day after day—with the man fastened by the foot. But then the Explosion came! Why was my husband burned alive? Why the whole man? And not only the foot which was the most important part of my man? Why must my man be burnt, body and limbs, because of a foot?—Because foot and body and limbs were all part of him, because the foot will not work without the man. The foot cannot work alone—it needs my man.——Is this plant like my man—who lived only one day—his wedding day—and died a whole life long?—Are not old worn-out pieces replaced with new?—and the works go on as before?—Is not every man a mere part, interchangeable with other parts—and the works go on?—Do not fight for the man at the lever—do not fight for the man at the sight-tube—do not fight for the man on the iron car—the Engineer blocks the way—the Engineer blocks the way!

Women [*about the platform*]. Not for our men!

Girls. Not for our brothers!

Mothers. Not for our sons!

[*The* WOMAN *leaves the platform. The* WORKMAN *appears on the platform.*]

Workman. Girls—I am your brother. I have sworn it—and I am your brother. I have sworn—and I am burned as he was burnt. I am lying under the ashes and dust—until you send me back to the lever—in place of your brother—who was blown up.—Here is his hand—broad and stiff, for gripping a jerking lever.—This hand has had its earnings—they lay in the hollow of it—and this hand carried them home. And this hand never counted the wages—there they lay in the drawer—and filled the boxes—and became worthless. What can a hand buy—now that this hand has lost its motive power—your brother? What can a hand wish? desire? A single hand—and all the savings in the box!—That hand has been paid for—but not your brother!—He has been burnt alive—and has, therefore, become alive—and now he is crying for his wages —: give us the Engineer—give us the Engineer!

Workmen [*around the platform*]. We are your brothers!

[*The* WORKMAN *descends among them.*]

Workman [*already standing on the platform*]. Mother—I am your son!—he has grown alive again—for the sake of his eyes—those eyes that stared so because of the sight-tube—he has grown alive again. Your son lives again—in me—breathing and speaking! Mother—I sacrificed myself for a sight-tube as long as a finger—Mother—I gave myself for the sake of the sight-tube—Mother—I died all over my whole body—and all that remained alive in me were my two eyes! I poured my wages

upon the table before you—you did not catch the coin in your apron—it rolled upon the floor—Mother—you no longer bend down to pick it up! Do not pick it up—do not pile it into stacks—you cannot build a house for your son with such columns! He lives in a glass capsule, narrow and poisonous—in the sight-tube—Read the tables in the office and see if you can find the price of a Mother—for my blood and the blood of my Mother—for it was blood that these eyes drank at the sight-tube. Count up your earnings, the premiums, the profits we share—are they enough to pay for a Mother and a Mother's son? The eyes fixed upon the sight-tube brought their profit—but the son came out of it with empty hands. Ought he not charge Heaven and Earth with this great debt? Is he not willing to accept a mere trifle in payment for this debt? What is this worth in comparison with his sacrifice? The Engineer? Only the Engineer! and my eyes look past the Mother and stare at the sight-tube—only the Engineer—only the Engineer!

Workman [*below the platform*]. I am a son!

[WORKMAN *on platform descends among them.*]

Workman [*now on platform*]. Woman—your wedding-day will come once more! That day—with its morning, its noon and its evening will be yours once more! It will be *the* day—and all the other days that follow it will not seem like days at all. Your husband will go rolling back and forth again on the iron car—forwards and backwards—a man attached to a foot that operates a switch—Why don't you laugh—you whose whole life is crammed into a single day!—a man and a woman with a whole day between them—is it not a waste of time while the iron car is whizzing to and fro?—Doesn't the dancing foot feel for the switch-block even in the dance?—Can the piano shut out the sound of the iron wheels grinding the tracks? No, not a single day belongs to you—or to your man!—the iron car keeps rolling, and the foot controls it, and the beat of it holds the man. Can a drop out of a bucket grow into a river—can one day out of a thousand days make up a life? Do not be deceived by the profits: no real profits could be spent in one day!—You have your profits—but you do not live! What good to you are profits—profits made by the foot—profits which make a man poor in living?—You have lost time—and so you have lost life—you have lost everything—time and life—and you should spit upon these gains which are worthless in the face of what you have lost! Cry out your losses—fill your mouths with fury and curses, cry out: We have lost time and life—shout!—shout!—shout! Shout your demand—shout your will—shout what you want—shout if only to prove you have a voice—shout merely to shout—the Engineer!

Workmen [*throughout the entire hall*]. Shout! shout!

[*The* WORKMAN *leaves the platform.*]

Workman [*on the platform*]. Girls and Girls—we promise you!—Women and Women—we promise you!—Mothers and Mothers—we promise you—not one of us will drive a spade into the rubbish—not one of us will lay a brick—not one of us drive home a rivet in steel—Our resolve remains unshakable—the Works will never go up—unless they give us a new Engineer! Come and crowd this hall every day—Brothers and brothers—Sons and sons—Husbands and husbands—each as determined as the other—and let there be one unbendable will in the assemblies—up with your right hands—out with the oath—no Gas—if this Engineer remains!

All Men, All Women. No Gas!—if this Engineer remains!

[WORKMAN *leaves the platform.*]

Strange Workman. Our resolutions tally with yours—I am sent here by the men of our plant—and the plant is standing still! We are waiting, we are with you—until you give us the word to take up work again. Count upon us—state your demands!

All Men, All Women. The Engineer!

[STRANGE WORKMAN *leaves the platform. Another* STRANGE WORKMAN *ascends it.*]

Strange Workman. I am a stranger to you. I hail from a distant factory. I bring you this message—we have laid down our work because you are on strike. We are with you to the last. Hold out—stand firm—force your demands—for you speak in the name of all—you are responsible for all!

All Men, All Women. The Engineer!

[STRANGE WORKMAN *leaves the platform.*]

Workman [*on platform*]. We shout, but our shouts do not cause this hall to explode. Our shouts go thundering into the vault up there and echo from blocks of concrete, but they

do not go ringing out into the world.—Out! out of the hall!—make for the house—his house—thunder your cries at him who still keeps on the Engineer!—Form ranks!—march across the waste of ashes—go look him out—he cannot hear us here—he cannot hear us here!

All Men, All Women. On to the house!!—he cannot hear us here!

[*The Crowd pushes tumultuously toward the doors. A stormy babble of voices.*]

Voice of Billionaire's Son. I hear you—here! [*A deathly silence.*]

Voice of Billionaire's Son. I am here—in this hall—I have heard you!

[*A buzzing and craning of necks among the crowd.*]

Voice of Billionaire's Son. I will answer you—here in this very hall!

[*Great excitement and movement.*]

Voice of Billionaire's Son. You shall listen to me now! [*A path is cleared for him.*]

Clerk [*leaping upon the platform*]. Don't let him speak!—Don't let him come up!—Crowd together—don't make room!—Run! run out of the hall!—run to the works!—Run!—and clean up the rubbish—put up the scaffolds—rebuild the plant!—Don't listen to him!—Don't listen to him—Don't listen to him! Run!—run!!—I'll run ahead—back to my desk!—I must write—write!—write!

[*Rushes off platform.*]

Billionaire's Son [*on platform*]. I have been in the hall from the very beginning. You could not see me, because I shouted with you. Girl, I was a brother to you—Woman, I was a husband to you—Mother, I was a son to you. Every cry that passed your lips passed my own! And now I am here. Here I stand—stand above you—because I must state the final demand which you cannot state. You make a demand, but your demand is only a sand-grain of the mountain of demands you must make. You scream and scold about a trifle. What is the Engineer? What is he to you? What can he be to you—you who have come through the fiery furnace? What can he be to you who have passed through Annihilation? What can the Engineer be to you? It is only a cry of yours, a word that means nothing, an echoing word!—I know the Engineer is like a red rag to you—the sight of him brings back the Horror to you, the mere sight of him. The Engineer and the Explosion are one—the formula could not keep the Gas in check—this Engineer controlled this formula—and this formula brought on the Explosion. You think that you can put out the Explosion only after you have chased away the Engineer. And that is why you cry out against him.—Do you not know that the formula tallies? That it tallies, that it is correct to the very limits of calculation? You know this—yet you cry out against the Engineer!

Voices [*sullenly*]. The Engineer!

Billionaire's Son. Your cry comes from a deeper source! Your demand comprises much more than you demand! I urge you to demand more! [*Silence.*]

Billionaire's Son. What was there so terrible about the Explosion? What did it burn up—what did it rend apart? Did it go booming and hissing over one of you—one of you who was not already mutilated before the Explosion? Girl—your brother—was he whole?—Mother—your son, was he whole?—Woman—your man—was he whole? Was there a single man in all the works who was whole and sound? What havoc could the Explosion wreak upon you?—You who were shattered before the walls fell—you who were bleeding from many wounds before the crash came—you who were cripples—with one foot—with one hand—with two burning eyes in a dead skull—can the Engineer make this good? Can any demand make this good again? I tell you—demand more—demand more!

Girls, Women, Mothers [*shrilly*]. My brother!—my son!—my husband!

Billionaire's Son. Brother and Brothers—Son and Sons—Man and Men—the call goes forth, the summons soars up from this hall—over the wreckage—over the avalanches that buried brother and brothers—son and sons—man and men—and it comes circling back into your hearts—demand to be yourselves!

[*Silence.*]

Billionaire's Son. Demand!—and I will fulfill!—You are men—you represent Humanity—in the son, in the brother—in the husband! A thousand ties bind you to all about you. Now you are parts—each is a perfect unit in the great Commonwealth. The whole is like a body—a great, living body. Deliver yourselves from confusion—heal yourselves!—you that have been wounded—be human, human, human! [*Silence.*]

Billionaire's Son. Demand!—and I will ful-

fill! Brother—you are a man—you are Man. That hand of yours which clutched the lever shall cripple you no longer!—Son, you are a man—your eyes shall leave the sight-tube and gaze into the blue distances! Husband, you are a man—your day shall be the day of all the days you shall live! [*Silence.*]

Billionaire's Son. Space is yours—and all that life can give within this space—it is Earth—it is your home. You are human beings in the great house of Earth. Every wonder is known to you—your will opens the way to all things!—In you the heavens reflect themselves and the surface of the Earth is covered with the garment of many-coloured grasses—as with a flood. The day's work is great and full of gladness and full of many new inventions. But you are not inventions—you are perfected even now—complete—from this new beginning onward. You have achieved a greater humanity—after this last shift you are done with the task to which you had been pledged!—You have completed the shift, toiled to the very extreme—the dead have sanctified the ground—you, that part of you, lies buried! [*Silence.*]

Billionaire's Son. All that you demand—I will grant—To-morrow you shall be free human beings—in all their fulness and unity! Pastures broad and green shall be your new domains. The settlement shall cover the ashes and the wreckage which now cover the land. You are dismissed from bondage and from profit-making. You are settlers—with only simple needs and with the highest rewards—you are men—Men! [*Silence.*]

Billionaire's Son. Come out of the hall—come, walk upon the new homesteads—take measure of the land! No great effort is needed—but all creation waits—limitless—vast! Come out of the hall—come into the open! [*He leaves the platform.*] [*Silence.*]

[*The* Engineer *stands upon the platform.*]

A Voice [*shrilly*]. The Engineer!

Engineer. I am here!—Listen to me: I will bow to your will—I will go. I will take upon me the great shame which will be branded upon my brow—if I should go. I will take upon me all the curses which go howling up against me—and my departure shall be the confession of my monstrous guilt. I will be guilty—as you wish!—I will go—so that you may return to the works!—The way is free—it leads back to the works!

Billionaire's Son [*from below*]. Come out of the hall!—and build up the colony!

Engineer. Stay here!—stay here in this hall!—my voice is big enough for all of you—here you can hear me thunder!

Billionaire's Son. Come out of the hall!

Engineer. Stay in the hall—refuse to be frauds! [*Growls and murmurs.*]

Billionaire's Son. Hatred is still at work here—outside the winds will sweep it away.

Engineer. You cheat the very shame with which you would scorch me. I am going—and you must go—back to work!

Billionaire's Son. Fling open the doors—out!—into the daylight!

Engineer. You must go back to the works.—Do not pile fraud upon fraud—do not betray yourselves. Face the victory you have won—the victory that crowns you—Gas!—It is *your* work which creates these miracles in steel. Power, infinite power, throbs in the machines which you set going—Gas!—*You* give speed to the trains which go thundering your triumphs over bridges which *you* rivet. *You* launch leviathans upon the seas, and *you* divide the seas into tracks which *your* compasses decree! You build steep and trembling towers into the air which goes singing about the antennae from which the sparks speak to all the world! *You* lift motors from the earth and these go howling through the air out of sheer fury against the annihilation of their weight! You who are by nature so defenceless that any animal may attack and destroy you—you who are vulnerable in every pore of your skin—you are the victors of the world! [*Profound silence.*]

Billionaire's Son [*at the foot of the platform, pointing at the* Engineer]. He is once more showing you the pretty picture-book—of your childhood days. He would tempt you with memories. But you are no longer children—for *now* you have become adult!

Engineer. You are heroes in soot and sweat.—You are heroes at the lever—at the sight-tube—at the switch-block. You persist grandly, immovably, amidst the lashing of the pulleys and the thumping and thundering of the pistons!—And even the greatest ordeal of all cannot appal you for long—the Explosion!

Billionaire's Son. Come out of the hall!

Engineer. Where would you go?—would you leave your kingdom and enter a sheepfold? Go pottering from early till late in the tiny quadrangle of your farms? Plant paltry

weeds with those hands of yours—hands that created towering forces? And your passion for work—shall it serve merely to nourish you—and no longer create?

Billionaire's Son. Come out of the hall!

Engineer. Here you are rulers—in these works where the motive power of the whole world is born—you create Gas! There is your rule, your mastery—the empire you have established—shift upon shift—day and night—full of feverish work! Would you barter this power for the blade of grass that sprouts as it will?—Here you are rulers—there you are—peasants!

A Voice [*crying*]. Peasants!

Other Voices. Peasants!

More Voices. Peasants!

All Men, All Women [*a torrent of shouts and upflung fists*]. Peasants!!!

Engineer [*stands there in a triumphant attitude*].

Billionaire's Son [*at foot of the platform*]. Will you listen to him—or to me?

All Men, All Women. To the Engineer!

Engineer. The Explosion has *not* sapped your courage! Who gives in to Fear?

Billionaire's Son. I do not wish you to fear.—Is it not I who make the greater demands upon your courage?—Do I not ask you to realise—Man? How can you become peasants again— after you have been workmen?—Do we not expect you to climb still higher? The peasant in you has been overcome—and now the Workman must be overcome—and Man must be the goal! This mission thrusts you forward—not backward. Have you not ripened—after this last experience? How far could you still go—working with your hands—working in shifts?—Are your thundering trains, and vaulting bridges and flying motors sufficient recompense for your fever? No, you would laugh at the miserable wages!—Are you tempted by the rich profits which we share? But you waste these again—as you waste yourselves!—The fever is in you—a madness of toil, which brings forth nothing. It is you that the fever eats. It is not your house that you build! You are not the wardens—you sit in the cells! You are pent about by walls, and these walls are the work of your own hands. Come forth! I say, come forth! You are heroes—who do not fear the new adventure! You do not fear to go to the end of the road—terror cannot palsy your steps! The road has come to an end—exalt your courage with fresh courage—Man has arrived!

Engineer. You would be peasants, slaves to grubbing toil!

Billionaire's Son. You are men—in all your Wholeness and all your Oneness!

Engineer. Petty needs will mock your rightful claims!

Billionaire's Son. All that you hope for you shall receive!

Engineer. Your days would be lost in sloth!

Billionaire's Son. You are working at a timeless task!

Engineer. Not a single invention could take form!

Billionaire's Son. You are honourably discharged—you are promoted—to human be —

Engineer [*holding a revolver over his head*]. Shout—and let destruction come!

Billionaire's Son. Leave destruction and come forth to the consummation—of Humanity!

Engineer. Shout!—and your shout shall destroy me—but go back to work!

[*The muzzle at his temple. Silence.*]

Engineer. Dare the word!

Voice [*suddenly*]. The Engineer shall lead us!

Voices and Voices. The Engineer shall lead us!

All Men, All Women. The Engineer shall lead us!

Engineer. Come out of the hall!!—back to the works!—From Explosion to Explosion!!—Gas!!

All Women, All Men. Gas!

[*The* Engineer *leaves the platform. Broad doors are flung open. The* Workers *stream out.*]

Billionaire's Son [*tottering upon the platform*]. Do not strike down your brother Man! You shall not manufacture cripples! You, Brother, are more than a hand! You, Son, are more than a pair of eyes!—You, Husband, live longer than one day!—You are eternal creatures—and perfect from the very beginning!—do not let the days mutilate you, nor dumb mechanical movements of the hand—be greater, be greedy for the higher thing—in yourselves—in yourselves!!

[*Empty hall.*]

Billionaire's Son [*summoning up all his strength*]. I have seen man—I must protect him against himself!

ACT FIVE

A wall of brick or concrete, partly shattered and blackened by the Explosion. A wide iron gate, thrown from its hinges, in the centre of this wall. A waste of rubbish.

Outside the gate a soldier with rifle and fixed bayonet.

The BILLIONAIRE'S SON *with a bandage about his head, standing in the shelter of the wall.*

An OFFICER, *a* CAPTAIN, *in a waiting attitude, in the centre.*

Billionaire's Son. It is all a horrible mistake. I must speak—I must explain.

Captain. They met you with a volley of stones.

Billionaire's Son. They would not do it a second time—when they see that they have injured me.

Captain. I would not be so sure of that.

Billionaire's Son. The sight of the soldiers angers them. That is the real reason.

Captain. You sought this shelter yourself.

Billionaire's Son. Not for myself. I wanted to shut off the works. I could do that in three or four words.

Captain. They won't let you speak even one word.

Billionaire's Son. But surely they would not attack me—when I want to justify myself!

Captain. Keep close to the wall!

Billionaire's Son. Will you escort me out?

Captain. No.

Billionaire's Son. No?

Captain. They might also attack me—and I should be obliged to open fire.

Billionaire's Son. No, no, not that!—I must wait then, until they come to their senses!

[*The* SOLDIER *before the gate is relieved by another* SOLDIER. *Cries and clamour from thousands of throats.*]

Billionaire's Son. What are they shouting for now?

Captain. The sentry is being relieved.

Billionaire's Son. This confusion is terrible! Can't they understand what I am after? They are my brethren—I am merely older, more mature—and must keep my hand over them!

[*Enter the* GOVERNMENT COMMISSIONER *from the right.*]

Government Commissioner [*at the gate, peering out*]. The situation looks serious! [*To the* CAPTAIN]. Are you prepared for all emergencies?

Captain. Machine-guns.

[*The tumult without has arisen afresh and continues until the* GOVERNMENT COMMISSIONER *moves away from the gate.*]

Government Commissioner [*to* BILLIONAIRE'S SON, *lifting his top-hat, and looking for papers in his portfolio*]. The extraordinary and dangerous developments in your works have compelled the Government to discuss the situation with you. May I present my authorisation?

Billionaire's Son [*taking the paper, reading, looking up*]. Full powers?

Government Commissioner. Under certain conditions. Shall we proceed to negotiations—here?

Billionaire's Son. I shall not leave this place.

Government Commissioner [*putting the paper back into his portfolio, taking out another*]. The events which have led up to this strike may, no doubt, be summarized as follows:—After the catastrophe the workmen refused to take up the rebuilding of the plant because certain conditions which they had made were not accepted by you, these conditions involving the discharge of the Engineer.

Billionaire's Son. That would not have prevented fresh catastrophes!

Government Commissioner. The Government can recognise only facts.

Billionaire's Son. But the Explosion is certain to occur again—there is only this formula—only this—or no Gas!

Government Commissioner. Future eventualities cannot be accepted as evidence. The condition imposed by the Workmen was rejected by you. As a consequence the Workmen continue the strike—which has now spread to neighbouring works, and is extending itself from day to day.

Billionaire's Son. Yes! Yes!

Government Commissioner. In the meantime the Engineer has offered his resignation at a meeting of the Workmen. A sudden change of feeling on the part of the Workmen induced them to drop their demand, and now they wish the Engineer to remain.

Billionaire's Son. Yes!

Government Commissioner. The cause of the strike has thereby been done away with, and the Workmen are willing to take up work again.

Billionaire's Son. As you see—they are clamoring to get in.

Government Commissioner. But now you have issued an order forbidding them to return. You declare that you could not possibly render yourself responsible for the production of Gas!

Billionaire's Son. No—for the destruction of human life!

Government Commissioner. The Government is fully cognisant of the uncommon severity of the misfortune which has regrettably taken place.

Billionaire's Son. That says little.

Government Commissioner. The number of victims has called forth the greatest sympathy. The Government is preparing a vote of condolence in Parliament. The Government is of the opinion that in making this proclamation in so conspicuous a place it has done full justice to you and to the Workmen.

Billionaire's Son. Yes. The Government has no power beyond this. The rest will be my task.

Government Commissioner. It is with the gravest concern that the Government has heard of your further intentions of permanently keeping the works from being rebuilt.

Billionaire's Son. You must not doubt my powers—I will carry out my plans!

Government Commissioner [*drawing forth a new paper*]. A conference as to how this danger may best be averted has already taken place.

Billionaire's Son. Give me a few soldiers—and give me a guarantee that I shall be heard—out there!

Government Commissioner. The danger involved in a stoppage of the production of Gas has induced the Government to make you a confidential communication.

Billionaire's Son [*staring at him*]. You—demand—Gas!

Government Commissioner. The whole armament industry is operating upon a basis of Gas. The lack of this motive power would inflict great damage upon the manufacture of war material. And a war is imminent. Our programme of armaments cannot be carried out without this supply of energy. It is this solemn contingency which forces the Government to declare that it cannot any longer tolerate a delay in the delivery of Gas to the armament plants!

Billionaire's Son. Am—I—not—my—own—master—on—my—own—ground?

Government Commissioner. The Government is impelled by a sincere desire to come to an understanding with you. It is prepared to further the reconstruction by every means in its power. Toward this end it has ordered four hundred motor-lorries, with tools and workmen—they will be here in the course of the hour. The clearance of the wreckage can be taken in hand at once.

Billionaire's Son. ——To make weapons—to be used against human beings!

Government Commissioner. I trust that you will treat my communication with the utmost secrecy.

Billionaire's Son. I—I will bellow it out—I will look for confidants in every nook and corner!

Government Commissioner. I can well understand your excitement. But the Government is face to face with a grim necessity.

Billionaire's Son. Do not blaspheme! It is Man alone who is necessary!—Why must you inflict new wounds upon him—we find it so hard to cure the old!—Let me talk to them—I must go ——

[*At the gate. He is greeted with howls.*]

Captain [*pulling him back*]. You will unloose the storm!

Billionaire's Son [*tottering against the wall*]. ——Are we all mad? ——

Government Commissioner. It is important that the Government should know whether or not you intend to persist in your refusal to let the Workmen recommence work?

Billionaire's Son. Now—more than ever, I regard it as my duty—to refuse.

Government Commissioner. You persist in your former refusal?

Billionaire's Son. As long as I can breathe and speak!

Government Commissioner. I must then make use of the power imposed in me by the Government. In view of the danger which threatens the defence of the Realm, the Government is obliged to dispossess you of your works for the time being and to carry on the manufacture of Gas under Government control. The reconstruction of the works will take place at the expense of the Government and will be taken in hand at once. We trust that we may count upon your making no attempt at resistance. We should greatly regret being forced to adopt more rigorous measures against you!—Captain, open the gates—I wish to communicate the essential points to the Workmen.

[*At the gate. A stormy tumult breaks loose.*]

Captain. Stand back!—stones!

Government Commissioner [*retreating to the shelter of the wall*]. This is incredible!

[*The uproar continues.*]

Government Commissioner. These people simply hinder——

Billionaire's Son. I do not fear them——

[*At the gate. The uproar at its maximum.*]

Billionaire's Son [*holds up his arms on high.*]

[*The surge of the tumult draws nearer.*]

Captain [*shouting to the Government Commissioner*]. They are coming!

[*He goes through the gate—issues orders towards the left. A machine-gun detachment comes and takes up position. The* Captain *stands, holding his naked sword over his head, prepared to give the signal. Deep silence.*]

Government Commissioner [*close to the* Billionaire's Son]. Why won't you forestall this bloodshed?

Billionaire's Son [*stands as though stunned.*]

Government Commissioner. Here [*he hands him his white handkerchief*]. They will understand this sign. Wave this white flag!

Billionaire's Son [*obeys mechanically*].

Government Commissioner. You see—that works— They are dropping their stones! [*To the* Captain]. Throw the gates wide open! [*Soldiers throw open the gates*]. Withdraw the cordon! [*The* Captain *and the machine-gun detachment withdraw. To the* Billionaire's Son.] I will go tell them at what point the lorries will deliver the tools. I'll lead the people there myself!

[*He goes through the gate. Soon after high, clear shouts and cheers are heard without—these grow rapidly fainter. Silence.*]

Billionaire's Son [*sinks upon a heap of débris.*]

[*Enter the* Daughter—*in black.*]

Daughter [*goes up to him—puts her arms about his shoulders.*]

Billionaire's Son [*looks up in surprise*].

Daughter. Do you not know me?

Billionaire's Son. Daughter!—in black!

Daughter. My husband is dead.

Billionaire's Son. Have you come to reproach me—Will you, too, cast a stone upon me?

Daughter [*shakes her head*]. Are you all alone here?

Billionaire's Son. Yes, I am alone at last—like all men who wish to give themselves to all men!

Daughter [*touching the bandage about his forehead*]. Did they strike you?

Billionaire's Son. They struck me—struck me, too. There are bolts that rebound and wound both—the archer and the target.

Daughter. Is all danger over?

Billionaire's Son. Are men born? Born of women—men who do not scream nor make horrible threats? Has Time lost count of itself—and thrust Mankind into the light? What does Man look like?

Daughter. Tell me!

Billionaire's Son. I have lost all memory of Man. What was he like? [*He takes her hands.*] Here are hands—and growing to these—[*taking her by the arms*]—are limbs, members—and the body unites them—parts that are active, parts of the whole, and all a part of life——!

Daughter. Tell me!

Billionaire's Son. The torrent rages too hideously—it overflows the banks. Cannot a dam be built which will hold in the flood? Cannot this raging be bounded, cannot it be used to water the barren places of the Earth and convert them into pastures of peaceful green? Is there no halting? [*He draws his* Daughter *close to him.*] Tell me, where can I find Man? When will he make his appearance—when will he announce his name—Man? When will he understand himself? And plant the Tree of his Knowledge of Himself? When will he rid himself of the primal curse?—when will he re-create the creation which he has ruined—Man?—Was I not happy in having had a glimpse of him and his coming?—Did I not behold him clearly with all the symbols of his fullness of power—silent, yet speaking the tongue that all the world understands?—Man! Was Man not close to me—Mankind? Can Man be extinguished—must he not come again and again—now that at least one man has seen his face? Must he not arrive—to-morrow or the day after to-morrow—every day—every hour? Am I not a witness for him—and for his lineage and his advent?—Do I not know him—his bold, beautiful face? Can I doubt any longer?

Daughter [*sinking on her knees before him.*] I will give him birth.

THE END

GAS—Part II

By GEORG KAISER

Translated from the German by WINIFRED KATZIN

CHARACTERS

The Billionaire Worker
The Chief Engineer

- First
- Second
- Third
- Fourth
- Fifth
- Sixth
- Seventh

} Figures in Blue

- First
- Second
- Third
- Fourth
- Fifth
- Sixth
- Seventh

} Figures in Yellow

Workers: Men, Women, Old Men, Old Women, Youths and Girls

The action takes place in the same country as that of "Gas I," but a generation later

GAS—Part II

ACT ONE

Concrete Hall. Light falls in dusty beams from arc-lamp. From misty height of dome dense wires horizontally to iron platform, thence diagonally distributed to small iron tables—three right, three left. Red wires to the left, green to the right. At each table a First Figure in Blue*—seated stiffly, uniformed—gazing into glass pane in the table which, lighting up, reflects its colour on the face above it, red to the left, green to the right. Across and further down, a longer iron table chequered like a chess-board with green and red plugs—operated by the* First Figure in Blue. *For a time, silence.*

Second Figure in Blue [*at red pane*]. Report from third fighting-sector—Enemy concentration preparing. [*Pane dark.*]

First Figure in Blue [*switches red plug*].

Fifth Figure in Blue [*at green pane*]. Report from third works—production one lot below contract. [*Pane dark.*]

First Figure in Blue [*switches green plug*].

Third Figure in Blue [*at red pane*]. Report from second fighting-sector—Enemy concentration preparing. [*Pane dark.*]

First Figure in Blue [*switches red plug*].

Sixth Figure in Blue [*at green pane*]. Report from second works—production one lot below contract. [*Pane dark.*]

First Figure in Blue [*switches green plug*].

Fourth Figure in Blue [*at red pane*]. Report from first fighting-sector—Enemy concentration preparing. [*Pane dark.*]

First Figure in Blue [*switches red plug*].

Seventh Figure in Blue [*at green pane*]. Report from first works—production two lots below contract. [*Pane dark.*]

First Figure in Blue [*switches green plug*]. [*Silence.*]

Second Figure in Blue [*at red pane*]. Report from third fighting-sector—enemy sweeping forward. [*Pane dark.*]

First Figure in Blue [*switches red plug*].

Fifth Figure in Blue [*at green pane*]. Report from third works—production three lots below contract. [*Pane dark.*]

First Figure in Blue [*switches green plug*].

Third Figure in Blue [*at red pane*]. Report from second fighting-sector—enemy sweeping forward. [*Pane dark.*]

First Figure in Blue [*switches red plug*].

Sixth Figure in Blue [*at green pane*]. Report from second works—production five lots below contract. [*Pane dark.*]

First Figure in Blue [*switches green plug*].

Fourth Figure in Blue [*at red pane*]. Report from first fighting-sector—enemy sweeping forward.

First Figure in Blue [*switches red plug*].

Seventh Figure in Blue [*at green pane*]. Report from third fighting-sector—enemy breaking through. [*Pane dark.*]

First Figure in Blue [*switches green plug*]. [*Silence.*]

Second Figure in Blue [*at red pane*]. Report from third fighting-sector—enemy breaking through. [*Pane dark.*]

First Figure in Blue [*switches red plug*].

Fifth Figure in Blue [*at green pane*]. Report from third works—production nine lots below contract. [*Pane dark.*]

First Figure in Blue [*switches green plug*].

Third Figure in Blue [*at red pane*]. Report from second fighting-sector—enemy breaking through.

First Figure in Blue [*switches red plug*].

Sixth Figure in Blue [*at green pane*]. Report from second works—production eleven lots below contract. [*Pane dark.*]

First Figure in Blue [*switches green plug*].

Fourth Figure in Blue [*at red pane*]. Report from first fighting-sector—enemy breaking through. [*Pane dark.*]

First Figure in Blue [*switches red plug*].

Seventh Figure in Blue [*at green pane*]. Report from first works—production twelve lots below contract. [*Pane dark.*]

First Figure in Blue [*into telephone by him*]. The chief engineer!

The Chief Engineer [*comes in: aged in petrification of fanatical working energy, gaunt profile, white streak in hair, white smock*].

First Figure in Blue. Control stations report less production of gas. *Is* defaults against *Must* by twelve lots.

Chief Engineer. Collapse of workers at pressure-gauges, at switch-gears, at levers.

First Figure in Blue. Why no substitutes?

Chief Engineer. Each shift combed of each superfluous man or woman.

First Figure in Blue. Disease?

Chief Engineer. Then without visible sign.

First Figure in Blue. Delivery of food unhindered?

Chief Engineer. Supply continuous, variety, plenty.

First Figure in Blue. Disappointment over payment out of profits to be shared?

Chief Engineer. Already profits in net cash stuff wide even boys' pockets.

First Figure in Blue. Then how do you account for . . . the discrepancy?

Chief Engineer. Movement creates its own law. Excessive repetition of single action blunts the onspurring will to work. Gas is no longer a goal—purpose vanished in the little motion which repeated and repeated became purposeless, part without whole. Planless the man at his tool—the work withdrew ever farther out of sight as the man slipped day by day ever deeper into sameness and monotony. Wheel by wheel in whirring hum yet never cogged within next wheel and next wheel. Motion roaring upwards into emptiness and, unresisted, hurtling down to earth again.

First Figure in Blue. Can you discover no means by which to assure production?

Chief Engineer. New masses of workers to the machines.

First Figure in Blue. Not to be found after sevenfold siftings.

Chief Engineer. Children are already on full time.

First Figure in Blue. Then what?

Chief Engineer. Upleaping increase of gas deficit.

First Figure in Blue [*pointing to table*]. Do you see this? Calculation of attack and defence—comparison of force on either side.

Chief Engineer. Red dominates.

First Figure in Blue. Enemy spreads.

Chief Engineer. Green recedes.

First Figure in Blue. Gas withholds defence. [CHIEF ENGINEER *silent.*] This table works out the sum. We lack numbers, but our technical equipment is superior. That balances the outcome. So long as we maintain our technical strength. . . . With the impetus of the gas which we alone produce, our technical force far exceeds the enemy's. One lot of gas short of what is calculated here —and we lose our chance of salvation more completely than we have lost it already.

Chief Engineer [*staring*]. Then the possibility of our crushing the enemy is no longer . . . ?

First Figure in Blue. Chimera now!

Chief Engineer. The end?

First Figure in Blue. At best a draw with both sides check-mate. [CHIEF ENGINEER *catches at table for support.*] It simplifies the issue. It fell out the only possible way. Fight and downfall. Attack and resistance to the last on either side. Adversary against adversary to the last drop of blood, and they fall together. The enfeebled remnant that remains soon vanishes. None escape from that annihilation. [*strongly.*] This is knowledge only we possess!

Chief Engineer [*pulling himself together*]. Then what?

First Figure in Blue. Increase in production of gas without consideration of man, woman, or child. No more shifts—let one shift overlap the other without release. Every last hand mobilised from collapse to collapse. No rest, no respite. Let the last dead hand fall from the lever, the last dead foot slip off the switch-pedal, the last glazed eye turn sightless from the pressure-gauge—let this table here show: The last enemy wiped off the face of the earth, our last fighter dead at his post.

Chief Engineer [*tensely*]. I will fulfill that order.

First Figure in Blue [*stretching out his hand*]. In with us, into the tunnel that has no exit.

Chief Engineer [*taking his hand*]. Gas!

[*He goes. Outside nearby, high, shrill sirens, others farther off—fainter—silence.*]

First Figure in Blue [*into telephone*]. The Billionaire Worker. [*he comes—middle twenties—worker's dress, shaved head, barefoot.*] Is this your shift?

Billionaire Worker. No, but the relay summons has just sounded.

First Figure in Blue. Prematurely.

Billionaire Worker. You must have been forced into that decision.

First Figure in Blue. Under what compulsion?

Billionaire Worker. No worker can manage the earlier shift.

First Figure in Blue. What is your advice?

Billionaire Worker. What value has my advice here?

First Figure in Blue. You heard—I put the question to you.

Billionaire Worker. You can inform yourself by asking any worker in the factories.

First Figure in Blue. I ask no worker—I want my information from the chief.

Billionaire Worker. What chief?

First Figure in Blue [looking at him intently]. The one who stands before me.

Billionaire Worker. Is this your abdication?

First Figure in Blue. The new task demands redoubled strength. The chief and we unite our efforts.

Billionaire Worker. What do you want of us?

First Figure in Blue. Gas with tenfold energy.

Billionaire Worker [with a shrug]. You decide the production.

First Figure in Blue. That does not suffice. The workers are slack. They're soft—orders would run to water in their brains instead of stiffening them to action.

Billionaire Worker. Make your punishments harder.

First Figure in Blue. And take them off their work. . . .

Billionaire Worker. Can none be spared?

First Figure in Blue. From the last great spending of our forces? No. Annihilation on both sides—but annihilation!

Billionaire Worker [flinches, recovers himself]. What do you want of me?

First Figure in Blue. To send through the whole works a galvanizing current. Fanaticise them for the final ruin. Hate and pride can kindle a fever to heat the coldest veins for once—night will become day in the struggle to reach the goal that blood-red beacon lights.

Billionaire Worker. Is that the goal?

First Figure in Blue. Which your voice shall announce. Go amongst them in all the shops—let your words sound amidst the roar of the pistons and the hum of turning belts—overcome that din with your shout to arms that shows them the goal and lends meaning to their effort. Hands will grasp levers with new strength—feet tighten on the switch-pedals—eyes clear at the pressure-gauges. The floodgates of work shall open wide and gas overpower power.

Billionaire Worker [very calm]. I am due for punishment if I miss my shift.

First Figure in Blue. You are no longer a worker.

Billionaire Worker. You have no power to dismiss any worker in this factory.

First Figure in Blue. I lay you under special contract.

Billionaire Worker. I decline to accept it.

First Figure in Blue. Do you wish to make conditions?

Billionaire Worker. I repeat the only one which is the one my mother and my mother's father demanded: Set this factory free.

First Figure in Blue [fiercely]. Your grandfather and your mother protested against the production of gas. Therefore it became necessary to use force in the works. Otherwise our preparations for this war would have come to a standstill.

Billionaire Worker. Therefore their implacable refusal.

First Figure in Blue. We are engaged in a war such as no party was ever involved in before.

Billionaire Worker. I have obeyed every order in silence.

First Figure in Blue. The time has come now for you to speak.

Billionaire Worker. Against myself and against my mother?

First Figure in Blue. For the workers who want gas. After the explosion they came back—they rebuilt the factory—they stayed in the shops in spite of danger that hourly threatened. They bowed in willingness before their master, whose name then was gas, whose name today is downfall if a voice they will heed will make it known to them. Yours is that voice—at your "yes" the "yes" of thousands will light the train of fire for the ultimate destruction. Come over to us, and the half-dead will spring to life again throughout these works.

Billionaire Worker. I defend the legacy of my grandfather.

First Figure in Blue. The workers themselves laughed his plans to scorn.

Billionaire Worker. The form for people will manifest itself.

First Figure in Blue. For others who survive. There is no future for us.

Billionaire Worker. There is always a way out.

First Figure in Blue. Do you seek one without us?

Billionaire Worker. With you and within you.

First Figure in Blue [*after a moment's reflection*]. We shall achieve by punishment the output we require.

[*He makes a gesture of dismissal. The* Billionaire Worker *goes. Silence.*]

Second Figure in Blue [*at red pane*]. Report from third fighting-sector—enemy pressure irresistible. [*Pane dark.*]

First Figure in Blue [*switches red plug.*]

Third Figure in Blue [*at red pane*]. Report from second fighting-sector—enemy pressure irresistible. [*Pane dark.*]

First Figure in Blue [*switches red plug*].

Fourth Figure in Blue [*at red pane*]. Report from first fighting-sector—enemy pressure irresistible. [*Pane dark.*]

First Figure in Blue [*springs up*]. No report from the factories?

Chief Engineer [*enters hastily*].

Chief Engineer. Turmoil everywhere! Shift-changes hitched! Relief gang and gang on duty cease to cog! For the first time a gap opens in a system that has been flawless all the years. The pendulum swings wild! The machine has stalled.

First Figure in Blue. Your organisation?

Chief Engineer. Announced by sirens! Answered by the gang on duty with laying-down of tools—and by the relief-gang with ignoring it.

First Figure in Blue. Is anyone inciting them to resist?

Chief Engineer. Not a wheel-minder among them! It's the machine that is running wild—and it's running wild because its works are moving to a different rhythm. The new distribution of time has disturbed the old pace and drags it down to seconds which suffice for remembrance to remember themselves! Lightning flashes in heads and illuminates the path they have been driven along these years upon years! The tumult becomes a face grinning its hideousness into their horror-frozen minds!

First Figure in Blue. Then —— strike?

Chief Engineer. What is that?

First Figure in Blue. Are they leaving switch-gear, lever, observation dial?

Chief Engineer. Already happenings of the past! Standstill turned into movement!

First Figure in Blue. Commotion?

Chief Engineer. Flaming through the shops! Not a voice—not a cry—no eloquence! Silence of ice—gazing before them—or stealing a glance at the next man who does likewise at his neighbour, and so on from partner to partner! It is out of their eyes it's coming—this thing that is on its way to shatter us to bits—this tempest!

First Figure in Blue. A cordon round the shops—anyone attempting to leave to be stopped at the gates!

Chief Engineer. Is there still time?

Fifth Figure in Blue [*at green pane*]. Report from third works. . . .

Chief Engineer [*goes to him—reading off*]. Work stands still—workers leaving shops!

First Figure in Blue. Lock the others in.

Sixth Figure in Blue [*at green pane*]. Report from second works. . . .

Chief Engineer. Work stands still. . . .

Seventh Figure in Blue [*at green pane*]. Report from first works. . . .

Chief Engineer. Workers leaving shops!

First Figure in Blue. Alarm throughout the works!

Chief Engineer. Too late! We're crushed under the weight of their numbers. See it towering fearfully over us, the wave about to break. We have brought it towering over our heads—they come and we are here!

First Figure in Blue. Are they through?

Chief Engineer. In inevitable march. The line presses back upon the place we drove them from. There the storm gathers, there, when it breaks, it shall strike us—if we are here for the striking.

First Figure in Blue [*flinging the plugs together in disorder*]. The calculation did not come out—there was a remainder!

[*He goes out with the* Chief Engineer *and the* Figures in Blue. *The hall remains empty. Then an ever-swelling crowd of people emerge in a circle against the dim grey walls—men young and middle-aged, old men, boys, in gray workers' clothes, shorn-headed and barefoot; women, young and middle-aged, old women, girls, in the same clothes, barefoot, with gray kerchiefs close round their hair. A short distance from the tables the dead, silent, forward-pressing, movement, stops still. The outbreak comes in a great flood—silent—yet full of haste. The tables are overturned and passed from hand to hand until they vanish*

into the shadowy edge of the hall; the wires from platform to tables, from dome to platform, are torn away. Then utter silence. The women pull the kerchiefs off their heads and begin to smooth their hair.]

All [*looking at one another—in a great shout*]. No gas!

ACT TWO

Concrete hall. Dimmer light from the arc-lamps. Hall full.

Voices [*rising clear through a murmurous swell*]. What of us?

Girl [*on the platform—spreading her hair*]. Morning for us—day with a morning so filled with joy in light that it postpones the noon! Radiance streams from that morning, dawning as no morning dawned for us before. We open eyes of awe upon that wider vision, chaos of light in white and many colours . . . the wonder passes and is retrospect. Morning for me leads my lover to me by the hand.

Young Worker [*beside girl on the platform*]. Morning for you and me and our fulfilment. Empty were being and seeking from day to day, neither yours nor mine until this bright morning. Now the locked waters flow once more, tide strong against the shore, riotous with colour, loud with wedding joy!

Girl [*embracing him*]. Morning for you!

Young Worker [*holding her*]. Morning for you.

Girls and Young Workers [*pressing about the platform—embracing*]. Morning for us.

Voices of the Others. More for us!

Woman [*on the platform*]. Noon for us. Out of that beginning I had not yet drawn the arc that sweeps towards the height—it crept flat along the ground. Between man and wife nothing lay behind the morning—the dead husk rustled, riveting but not uniting. Now it showers out of the brightness, and the rainbow shines overhead. The clouds flaunt gold, they vanish in fire of glory the sky around, raining beneficence, warming and nourishing the dead-brittle crust. Man and wife at noon, one life, one breath, absorbed and welded, indistinguishable. Demands shall be answered, last and first, the answer rings forth with a noonday clamour through the blue noon over us.

Man [*beside her on the platform*]. Noon streams from you, driving a swarm of blue-rimmed clouds. Noon spread over me like a tent of permanence—bounding the space where I am yours. No exit to seduce where nothing serves—no will that defies where nothing signifies—the syllable is breathed and understanding outreaches further words where both command. Desire grew bold, immeasurable—body binds body, mated—our law is the doubling of being and being unabated, forbidding nothing, allowing nothing, for oneness knows neither pleading nor resistance and is indivisible in Man and Woman at noon.

Woman [*reaching out her hands*]. Noon for you!

Man [*taking them*]. Noon for you!

Men and Women [*round the platform, seeking one another's hands*]. Noon for us!

[MAN *and* WOMAN *down from platform.*]

Voices of Others. More for us!

Old Woman [*on the platform*]. Evening for us. Once to be still after the day's round, feet quiet in their shoes. What were morning and noon to me? No difference to me between the noon and the morning. One and the same and all the same pattern of bitter labour, slipping by like muddy trickling water over bumps in a stream-bed we can't see the bottom of. That was morning and noon for us. . . . Was I alone? Was no one by me in the beginning and after? Was I so quite alone? Did I go under with only myself, reach out my hand only for my own other hand to save me from sinking, sinking? Had I died lonely even then? . . . Evening brings life, adding all the lost hours to the hours that shall be. Time is dealt out to a new measure—I hold out my two hands and join them about nothingness—for it pours out of them—dazzled I look and see the treasure before me which noon and morning hid and evening reveals.

Old Man [*beside her on the platform*]. For us the evening. Rest from the aimless, driven haste; trees and shade for us now. Where whirls the tumult? Where are they hurrying? Drowsy birds twitter in the branches—wind soughs, rustles. Day ebbs away. Is it late? Morning is forcing and crowding without peace, without end. Was there loss? The curve of a lip can extravagantly bestow. You suffered no want, I promised myself nothing—and our evening discloses a plenty we shall never exhaust. [*Leads her with him down from the platform.*]

Old Men and Women [*moving towards them —supporting one another*]. Evening for us!

Voices of the Others. More for us!

A Voice. What of us?

Some Voices. More for us!

Other Voices. What of us?

A Wave of Voices. More for us!

A Counter-Wave of Voices. What of us?

Voices upon Voices [*in flood and counter-flood*]. More for us! What of us? [*Ending in a great cry. Silence.*]

A Voice. The Billionaire Worker!

All the Voices Together [*swelling—uniting—triumphing*]. The Billionaire Worker! [*Silence.*]

Billionaire Worker [*ascends the platform*]. I stand here, yours. Above you only by these steps I climb with my feet. [*On the platform.*] No mind more deep-thinking—no mouth more eloquent before you. You call to morning and to evening and to noon—and make the speakable articulate with words forever relevant. For you, Young Girl, the morning, dawn, and beginning of your life—and your sisters' here and your sisters' yet to come. That is primeval law! For you, Youth, the fire of early day, beating in blood and pulses with the first embrace—and in your brothers' here and in your brothers' yet to come. That is primeval law! For you, Woman, day big with noon, season of all fulfillment—and for all these women about you and all who are yet to come. That is primeval law! For you, Man, the high stars' brand of mighty noon—and for all these men about you and all who are yet to come. That is primeval law! For you, old men and old women, evening falling on shoulders, into laps, out of shadow and calm airs—lulling into the night that shall receive your sleep without cry, without fear. That is primeval law! [*Stronger.*] Day is about you again—day and its fullness, morning and noon and evening. Law is restored and shines out from new tablets. You have come home again—out of bondage—returned to the ultimate duties of life.

Voices. What of us?

Billionaire Worker. Proclaim yourselves in your self-recognition—under bitterest oppression crushed to earth—penned in slavery like beasts for the slaughter—you shall be heard! Your experience shall be your seal and oath—this is no child's play. Let your cry be heard—a truth of truths—in a great YES!

Voices upon Voices. What of us?

Billionaire Worker. Report yourselves in your unfolding! Your discovery would turn to sacrilege were you to hide what you have found. Silence would set a stain upon your souls, black and terrible, never to be effaced. The air in this house of yours will turn foul if you bar your windows shut and keep that light from shining on the streets without. You would stand cursed in that instant and forever damned.

All the Voices Together. What of us?

Billionaire Worker. Spread your tidings abroad! Send your cry forth out of this hall over all the world. Spare no labour—it shall be your last. Give of your treasure: it is inexhaustible and will return tenfold. Roll the dome clear!

[*Silence.*]

Voices upon Voices. Roll the dome clear!

All the Voices Together. Roll the dome clear!

Billionaire Worker. Stretch the wire that shall flash your message around the earth's circle!

Voices. Stretch the wire!

Voices upon Voices. Stretch the wire!

All the Voices Together. Stretch the wire!

Billionaire Worker. Send out the signal of truce to all the world's fighters!

Voices. Send out the signal!

Voices upon Voices. Send out the signal!

All the Voices Together. Send out the signal!

Young Worker [*On the platform—arms raised to the dome*]. We shall clear the dome!

[*Silence.*]

Voice [*above*]. We in the dome!

Voices [*below*]. Roll the dome clear!

Voice [*above*]. Rust clogs the grooves!

Voices [*below*]. Loosen the rivets!

Voice [*above*]. Mightily pressing. . . .

Voices [*below*]. Break down the girders!

Voice [*above*]. Plates giving way!

Voices [*below*]. Widen the gap!

Voice [*above*]. Now the dome moves!

All the Voices Together [*below*]. Roll the dome clear!

[*A broad beam of light falls suddenly from dome to ground, and remains there erect like a shining column. Dazzled silence—all faces raised.*]

Billionaire Worker [*calling upward*]. Speed up the work without slacking.

Voice [*above*]. The wire hangs plumb.

Billionaire Worker. Make haste to be done.

Voice [*above*]. Wireless at summit, here in good order.

Billionaire Worker. Flash what I call!

Voice [*above*]. We stand by.

Billionaire. Send out the rally: hands have ceased from their work—hands have quit their slaving for destruction—hands are free to take the pressure of all hands in ours which now rest. No Gas!

Voice [*above*]. Hands have ceased their work—hands have quit their slaving for destruction—hands are free to take the pressure of all hands in ours which now rest. No Gas!

All the Voices Together [*below*]. No Gas!

Billionaire Worker. Stand by for the answer!

Voices [*below*]. Tell us the answer!

[*Silence.*]

Voice [*above*]. Answer fails!

[*Silence.*]

Billionaire Worker. Send a new call: Tumult in blood subsided—fever fell cool—sight came to eyes that look up to greet you—shift-changing turned to abidance of being—No Gas!

All the Voices Together [*below*]. No Gas!

Billionaire Worker. Watch for the answer!

Voices upon Voices [*below*]. Call down the answer!

Billionaire Worker. Keep good watch for the answer!

[*Silence.*]

Voice [*above*]. Answer fails!

[*Silence.*]

Billionaire Worker. Urge a reply: Land melted into land—frontiers into the all—the farthest are neighbours—joining with you we disperse among you, divided in oneness, one in division. No Gas!

Voice [*above; repeating*]. Land melted into land—frontiers into the all—the farthest are neighbours—joining with you we disperse among you, divided in oneness, one in division—No Gas!

All the Voices Together [*below*]. No Gas!

Billionaire Worker. Take the answer right!

All the Voices Together [*below*]. Shout us the answer!

Billionaire Worker. Take it up accurately to the last syllable.

[*Silence.*]

Voice [*above*]. Answer fails!

[*Dead silence.*]

Voice [*from farthest rim of the crowd*]. Strangers!

Voices upon Voices. The Yellow Ones!

All the Voices Together. The Enemy!

[*They fall back, making way for seven* Figures in Yellow *who pass between them into the centre of the hall.* Billionaire Worker *staggers from the platform.*]

First Figure in Yellow. A hitch in the reckoning. A rift in the game. Yours threw the cards down, we overtrumped. Enter our losses into your books. [*Silence.*] The power of the gas you produce will serve our needs. Your work shall pay your debt but never liquidate it. Gas is our fuel. [*Silence.*] The works pass from your disposal to our commands. We scrap the schedule of your sharings. Proceeds shall concentrate out of your many hands into our few—wages for you in the minimum measure for maintenance of strength. [*Silence.*] From this hour these works resume the production of gas. You entered this hall as a crowd, you leave it as shifts—back to your service, shift succeeding shift. We are the users of gas and demand it—the Chief Engineer is the maker of gas and shall answer to us. [Chief Engineer *comes.*] The Chief Engineer stands in power over you to order and punish. [*Silence. To the* Chief Engineer.] Set the hall to rights.

Chief Engineer [*calls upwards*]. Roll the dome shut. [*The sunlight diminishes and is gone.*] Set up the tables. [*With noiseless and rapid obedience tables are reached over the heads of the crowd and set up in the centre.*] Stretch the wires. [*Swiftly, dully, wires are stretched from where they hang perpendicular from the dome diagonally to the tables as before.*] Recharge the lamps. [*Dusty light-beams from arc-lamps.*] To the shops, forward! [*Wordless melting away towards the edge of the hall—vanishment.*]

[*Six* Figures in Yellow *sit down at the tables.* First Figure in Yellow *arranges the plugs at the switch-board.* Chief Engineer *waits.*]

First Figure in Yellow [*to the* Chief Engineer]. Gas! [Chief Engineer *off.*]

ACT THREE

Cement hall. Dusty light beams from arc-lamp. At the tables the seven Figures in Yellow. *Silence.*

Second Figure in Yellow [*at red pane*]. *Report*

from requisitions headquarters—two quotas more required for third district.

[*Pane dark.*]

First Figure in Yellow [*switches red plug*].

Fifth Figure in Yellow [*at green pane*]. Report from third works: Production one lot below contract. [*Pane dark.*]

First Figure in Yellow [*switches green plug*].

Third Figure in Yellow [*at red pane*]. Report from requisitions headquarters: Three quotas more required for second district.

[*Pane dark.*]

First Figure in Yellow [*switches red plug*].

Sixth Figure in Yellow [*at green pane*]. Report from second works: Production one lot below contract. [*Pane dark.*]

First Figure in Yellow [*switches green plug*].

Fourth Figure in Yellow [*at red pane*]. Report from requisitions headquarters: Four quotas more required for first district.

[*Pane dark.*]

First Figure in Yellow [*switches red plug*].

Seventh Figure in Yellow [*at green pane*]. Report from first works: Production two lots under contract. [*Pane dark.*]

First Figure in Yellow [*switches green plug*].

[*Silence.*]

Second Figure in Yellow [*at red pane*]. Report from requisitions headquarters: Five quotas more required for third district.

[*Pane dark.*]

First Figure in Yellow [*switches red plug*].

Fifth Figure in Yellow [*at green pane*]. Report from third works: Production six lots under contract. [*Pane dark.*]

First Figure in Yellow [*switches green plug*].

Third Figure in Yellow [*at red pane*]. Report from requisitions headquarters: Eight quotas more required for second district.

[*Pane dark.*]

First Figure in Yellow [*switches red plug*].

Sixth Figure in Yellow [*at green pane*]. Report from second works: Production ten lots under contract. [*Pane dark.*]

First Figure in Yellow [*switches green plug*].

Fourth Figure in Yellow [*at red pane*]. Report from requisitions headquarters: Eleven quotas more required for first district.

[*Pane dark.*]

First Figure in Yellow [*switches red plug*].

Seventh Figure in Yellow [*at green pane*]. Report from first works: Production twelve lots under contract. [*Pane dark.*]

First Figure in Yellow [*springs up—telephones*]. The Chief Engineer! [CHIEF ENGINEER *comes—without haste.*] Check-up stations; verify decreased production of gas. *Is* defaults against *Must* by twelve lots.

Chief Engineer [*calmly*]. Are you astonished?

First Figure in Yellow. Does personal opinion enter?

Chief Engineer [*shrugging shoulders*]. If you can deny yourself.

First Figure in Yellow. Automaton as all are here.

Chief Engineer. The automata in the shops are moving fast with accessory sounds.

First Figure in Yellow. Buzzing what?

Chief Engineer. "Not for me."

First Figure in Yellow. Meaning?

Chief Engineer. This hand lifting lever—not for me. This foot pressing switch-pedal—not for me. These eyes watching pressure-gauge—not for me.

First Figure in Yellow. Do you know your responsibility?

Chief Engineer. Gas.

First Figure in Yellow. You will be held to account for every minus in delivery.

Chief Engineer [*peculiarly*]. I am prepared—for the reckoning.

First Figure in Yellow. You applied your powers?

Chief Engineer [*as before*]. Not yet.

First Figure in Yellow. You inflicted no punishments?

Chief Engineer. Upon whom?

First Figure in Yellow. The hand that falters at the lever—the foot that misses the switch-pedal—the eyes that blink before the pressure-gauge.

Chief Engineer. And take every man, woman and child off the shift.

First Figure in Yellow. All resisting?

Chief Engineer. We weaken from shift to shift.

First Figure in Yellow. Then what next?

Chief Engineer. Gas!

First Figure in Yellow. Why did you not flog the first that flagged?

Chief Engineer. No.

First Figure in Yellow. Did you doubt its spread, having begun?

Chief Engineer. No.

First Figure in Yellow. Why did you conceal these occurrences?

Chief Engineer. I did so.

First Figure in Yellow. Are you supporting the revolt?

Chief Engineer. With all my power.

Fifth Figure in Yellow [*at green pane*]. Report from third works: Production . . .

Chief Engineer [*triumphantly*]. Stopped!

Sixth Figure in Yellow [*at green pane*]. Report from first works: Production . . .

Chief Engineer. Stopped!

[*The* FIGURES IN YELLOW *leave their tables.*]

First Figure in Yellow. Who . . . ?

Chief Engineer. My orders! As I left to come here. With my power behind them, conferred by yourself. The obedient obey. No more hands lifting levers—for others. No more feet pressing switch-pedals—for others. No more eyes watching pressure-gauges—for others. Hand falls, fist clenches against you—foot withdraws, poises to run against you—eyes turn away, dart glances against you. Gas for us—gas against you!

First Figure in Yellow. Do you overlook the consequences?

Chief Engineer. None for us.

First Figure in Yellow. Batteries surround the works.

Chief Engineer. In triple circle.

First Figure in Yellow. Primed for the first sign of rebellion.

Chief Engineer. Rebellion rages!

First Figure in Yellow. The works to the last man, into the dust with one volley.

Chief Engineer. Are you sure?

First Figure in Yellow. We await your report of resumption of work within minimum delay. [*He signs to the* FIGURES IN YELLOW—*they leave together.*]

Chief Engineer [*at front table—telephones*]. Leave all shops—meeting in the hall.

[*Crowd entrance—shoving accumulation towards centre—full hall.*]

Voice [*at last—shrill, frightened*]. Who has turned us off?

Chief Engineer. Those who fill this place with crowding pressure to the limit of its walls. Those who left lever, switch-block, and gauge-glass in the lurch. Those who were serf-silence and will now be freemen-voice.

Voices upon Voices. Who has turned us off?

Chief Engineer. Those whose hands double to fists defying. Those whose feet rush to the attack. Those whose eyes take in the measure of the slave-master.

All the Voices Together. Who has turned us off?

Chief Engineer. Your command is your destiny. Your word is your law. Yesterday, rented slaves—masters today.

[*Silence.*]

Voice. What of us?

Chief Engineer. Release from debt and deeper debt. Backs pull straight after burden and yoke. Strangling compulsion relaxed.

Voices upon Voices. What of us?

Chief Engineer. Up from the knees. Weakness grows strong. Fear soars to fight.

All the Voices Together. What of us?

Chief Engineer. Unleash the slinking rage in you. Unleash the hatred that cringed in you. Unleash the poison that oozed in you. Repay!

Voices. Have we power?

Chief Engineer. Pushed from shadow into light. Purple for your rags. Nothingness raised to affluence.

Voices upon Voices. Have we power?

Chief Engineer. Beyond all measure. No weapon can strike with the force of your arms raised to strike. No shot is deadlier than the breath of your lungs. You are on the march, conquerors, before ever you reach the field.

All the Voices Together. Have we power?

Chief Engineer. The battle is yours without the loss of a knuckle-joint. In less than half a day, the day is yours. Where is the means to victory more terrible than yours? Poison Gas! [*He takes a red globe out of his pocket.*] My discovery for you. Beasts of burden you, and I too—and the shame devoured me for all of us. Not for a second did I lose sight of my goal, to destroy our whip-masters—at last I reached it—the formula that frees: hatred and shame were its ingredients. In a skin-thin glass—victory: that swells and eats away flesh from legs, bleaches stiff bones. [*Silence.*] There is no looking on the power of annihilation with impunity. Reason leaves, and madness enters the brain of the beholder who sees living men turned to bleached skeletons before his very eyes. Resistance screams itself down out of the mouth of the first inquisitive one who rashly rushes hither, crying out world's end and massacre! [*Silence.*] This is the decisive hour for time everlasting—decide, and you are the victors. Set the example—hurl your ball from the top of the dome—aim at the lines waiting to aim at you—meet onslaught with onslaught—hurl your balls!

Voices. Poison gas.

Chief Engineer. Be avengers!

Voices upon Voices. Poison gas!
Chief Engineer. Be fighters!
All the Voices Together. Poison gas!
Chief Engineer. Be conquerors!

[*Young workers crowd on to the steps of the platform—hands out-stretched for the globe.* BILLIONAIRE WORKER *pushes his way through them past their uplifted arms.*]

Billionaire Worker. Don't touch that globe. Reject that temptation. Do not destroy your power with the hurling of the balls.

Voices. The Billionaire Worker!

Billionaire Worker. Do not follow those orders. Do not aim in the dark. Do no mean and paltry trafficking.

Voices upon Voices. The Billionaire Worker!

Billionaire Worker. Protect your privileges. Know your means of conquest. Build upon rock the house that shall stand unshaken forever.

All the Voices Together. The Billionaire Worker!

[*The young workers have fallen away from the steps. The* BILLIONAIRE WORKER *ascends further.*]

Billionaire Worker. Spread your sight to span the new that began in the old. Beginning meets end, new truth, truth revealed. All ages debouch in your age, endlessly repeating. Your need is not discovery—your fulfillment not experiment and proof. Your lot is in the wheel thousands of years revolving—purifying your decisions with sorting and sorting. [*Silence.*] No road of many turnings leads to perfection as the street that is opening for you now. Yours the gain—your tables ran over. Riches were piled up all round you. [*Silence.*] But it scattered away like sand children play with on the beach. The rising of a wind retards nothing—you cannot stop springs black with the birth of earth-disturbing tempest. Momentum of release met you and flung you to the ground. A deep fall. The tower of your own height buried you. [*Silence.*] You were reckoned great before—you shall be greater now—as martyrs. [*Silence.*] The unslaked passion left you—day-labour. Endlessly satiating the nameless other replaced it. Not tables and shifts and dismissals feed it; but its own coin that pays never more, never less. [*Silence.*] Pay with the counterfeit they demand of you. Cheat the cheater with his own spurious currency's dull ring. Your work brings nothing to maturity—do it. Their currency is falling—convert it. Martyrs in the works—freemen in yourselves. [*Silence.*] Build up the kingdom. Not with the burden of new discoveries—distance does not intimidate. Hard upon the ungrudging promise crowd the first-fruits—law long and long since, piled on law—preparations ripe, time out of mind—use your existence to which all reverts—build to the last stronghold the kingdom which is in yourselves. [*Silence. The* BILLIONAIRE WORKER *on the platform.*] You shall dare what generations and generations have bred in you. You exiled one of yourselves, and wisely—over green pastures he decoyed you here before me. Not from outside can you protect the greatness within you—you cannot pen it in with colony and colony—your kingdom is not of this world! [*Silence.*] Face the stranger—pay him his interest—leave him his wage—shovel him his gains—suffer his demands—ignore the spine bleeding in your skin—Be your Kingdom! [*Breathing silence.*]

Chief Engineer [*at the foot of the steps*]. Treachery spits in your faces in that cry—do you not hear it? Have you no tongues to downcry it? Have you forgotten the pledge of your surging voices raised to me?

Billionaire Worker. Deliver yourselves within yourselves!

Chief Engineer. What will remain to you once dispossessed? Your necks for the bloody spurring of the lash—yourselves for defilement, laughing you to scorn—a cattle-team misused. And drudgery for ever, a whimgin cranking you eternally round and round, wearing and bearing you down. To be racked with chastisement when your limbs break under you. Those are your terms of hire.

Billionaire Worker. Let the kingdom arise, which shall reign in you almighty.

Chief Engineer. Let the power fall low which exploits you now. Yours the gain—without the bending of a finger. Gas the magician works for you. You use your victory as the victors of yesterday showed you to.

Billionaire Worker. Deliver yourselves in the endurance of serfdom which cannot touch the kingdom within.

Chief Engineer. Think of the tribute that will fall to you. No place on the world's globe but will be your debtor, no ships hold but will carry freight for you, no bridge but

whose arch bears supplies for you, no wire but flashes your commands from pole to pole. Your will is world-empire.

Billionaire Worker. The voice speaks again—the light that tempts and dazzles shines out again.

Chief Engineer. Give your purpose voice that it may bind you implacably.

Billionaire Worker. Decide for the way of humility.

Chief Engineer. Strike a bargain with your term and the bombardment!

Billionaire Worker. Return to your places, perform your services—they are the lesser part.

Chief Engineer [*on the platform*]. Take aim and cast the single throw which gives you victory.

Billionaire Worker. Return!

Chief Engineer [*holding the globe high*]. Dominion!

Billionaire Worker. Found the kingdom!

Chief Engineer. Ignite the gas that kills! [*Silence.*]

Billionaire Worker. Be silent and listen how heaven and earth both hold their breath before your decision which shall seal the fate of the world. [*Silence.*]

Voices. The gas that kills!

Voices upon Voices. The gas that kills!

All the Voices Together. The gas that kills!

Chief Engineer [*victorious*]. Ours the power! Ours the world! Aim the bomb—hasten the throw—they shall not shoot! . . . Who volunteers?

Young Workers [*storming on to the platform*]. I!

Chief Engineer. Have a care of this ball—it is dangerous.

Billionaire Worker [*restraining the young workers—turning to the* CHIEF ENGINEER]. I am the rightful one—I have priority.

All the Voices Together. The Billionaire Worker! [*The* CHIEF ENGINEER *gives him the bomb.*]

Billionaire Worker [*on the platform—bomb upraised over his head*]. My blood's blood beat for our conversion. My thirst slaked itself at the thirst of mother and mother's father. Our voices might have waked the wilderness—Our voices could wake the wilderness—men's ears are deaf. I am vindicated! I can fulfill! [*He throws the bomb into the air—it falls and smashes with a frail clatter. Silence.*]

Chief Engineer. The gas that kills.

All the Voices. The gas that kills.

[*Paralysed silence. Bombardment thunders from without. Darkness, and vast crash of collapsing walls. Silence. Light comes gradually. The hall a shambles of cement slabs lying on top of one another like broken gravestones—the skeletons of the workers already bleached jut out amongst them.* FIGURE IN YELLOW—*helmeted, telephone at head, hastens towards the wreckage, unrolling wire.*]

Figure in Yellow [*stops—stares wildly—shrieks into telephone*]. Report of effect of bombardment—Turn your bullets on yourselves—exterminate yourselves—the dead crowd out of their graves—day of judgment—*dies irae—solvet—in favil.* . . .

[*His shot shatters the rest. In the mist-grey distance sheaves of flaming bombs bursting together—vivid in self-extermination.*]

THE END

PELLÉAS AND MÉLISANDE

By MAURICE MAETERLINCK

Translated from the French by RICHARD HOVEY

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MAURICE MAETERLINCK AND HIS PLAYS

Maurice Maeterlinck, scientist, philosophic mystic, poet, and dramatist, the author of *Pelléas and Mélisande,* was born in Ghent, Belgium, in 1862. After practicing law for a time, he lived in Paris, where he became a leader in the symbolist movement in poetry; returned to Belgium in 1888; and returned to France in 1896, which he has ever since made his home. Between 1889 and 1896 he wrote the plays of his so-called "early period" that have been his most distinctive and influential contribution to the drama. These were followed by various works of philosophy and science. His reputation is based as much upon these as upon his poems and his plays.

Maeterlinck's early plays, though written in French, are not in the tradition of French drama. They are not French in feeling, in the first place; and, again, their material, their technique, and their style spring from sources other than French. The symbolism of later French poetry never reached the French stage; and Maeterlinck, a leader in the symbolistic movement in poetry, is the only dramatist writing in French who has applied this method to the drama. Between the earlier and the later plays of Maeterlinck there is in every respect a striking difference. His early plays were written actually to be performed by marionettes, since he held that the personality of the human actor was not a sufficiently clear medium for the transmission of the dramatist's ideas.

Furthermore, he maintained that mere action was not essential to drama, and was even a detriment, as he states in a famous passage in his *Treasure of the Humble*: "I have grown to believe that an old man, seated in his armchair, waiting patiently, with his lamp beside him; giving unconscious ear to all the eternal laws that reign about his house, interpreting, without comprehending, the silence of doors and windows and the quivering voice of the light, submitting with bent head to the presence of his soul and his destiny. . . . I have grown to believe that he, motionless as he is, does yet live in reality a deeper, more human, and more universal life than the lover who strangles his mistress, the captain who conquers in battle, or the husband who avenges his honor."

But the plays written under this theory are less static than might be expected. They have little external action, it is true, and that little moves almost imperceptibly; but a mighty stream of feeling flows beneath the surface and breaks out at last in a rush that carries the action over the precipice. Throughout such early plays as *The Blind, The Intruder, Home,* and *The Death of Tintagiles,* Maeterlinck is dramatizing the subconscious; his characters are willless creatures of destiny, moving blindly toward a foreordained doom. Their speech is musical, and like music, is suggestive of many moods; for Maeterlinck, as does D'Annunzio, utilizes the resources of other arts, thus widening the scope of dramatic technique. His "atmosphere" is established partly by this word-music, partly by his unworldly settings. And through all runs the insistent, suggestive symbolism of both setting and action, in which overtones and implications say more than direct speech, the symbol more than the fact.

Maeterlinck's later plays belong, principally, to another order, in which he entirely reverses his theory of the drama. In his *Double Garden,* he says, "Do what one will, discover what marvels one may, the sovereign law of the stage, its essential demand, will always be *action.*" But it is the Maeterlinck of the early plays who has exercised so potent an influence upon European drama and has affected dramatists so diverse as Hauptmann, D'Annunzio, Andreyev, and Claudel. As for content: the enigma of human fate, the sway of destiny, the power of the subconscious, the intense but almost hidden inner conflict; as for method: the slow, psychological action, the musical, hesitant, repetitious speech, the pictorially lovely and dream-like settings; and, always, the suggestive power of symbolism.

Pelléas and Mélisande is distinctly a transitional play from the earlier to the later method, combining some of the best qualities of each. It was produced first in Paris, in 1893. In London in 1895 it was produced in French by Lugné-Poe and his company, under the auspicies of The Independent Theatre. The first production in English in London was made in 1898 by Mrs. Patrick Campbell, who also made the first production in America, in New York, in 1902. In 1923 the play was revived in New York with Jane Cowl as Mélisande.

CHARACTERS

ARKËL, *King of Allemonde*
GENEVIÈVE, *mother of Pelléas and Golaud*
PELLÉAS, } *grandsons of Arkël*
GOLAUD, }
MÉLISANDE
LITTLE YNIOLD, *son of Golaud (by a former marriage)*
A PHYSICIAN
THE PORTER

Servants, Beggars, etc.

The action takes place in an imaginary kingdom suggestive of the Middle Ages

PELLÉAS AND MÉLISANDE

ACT ONE

SCENE ONE—*The gate of the castle.*

Maidservants [*within*]. Open the gate! Open the gate!

Porter [*within*]. Who is there? Why do you come and wake me up? Go out by the little gates; there are enough of them! . . .

A Maidservant [*within*]. We have come to wash the threshold, the gate, and the steps; open, then! open!

Another Maidservant [*within*]. There are going to be great happenings!

Third Maidservant [*within*]. There are going to be great fêtes! Open quickly!

The Maidservants. Open! open!

Porter. Wait! wait! I do not know whether I shall be able to open it; . . . it is never opened. . . . Wait till it is light. . . .

First Maidservant. It is light enough without; I see the sunlight through the chinks. . . .

Porter. Here are the great keys. . . . Oh! oh! how the bolts and the locks grate! . . . Help me! help me! . . .

Maidservants. We are pulling; we are pulling. . . .

Second Maidservant. It will not open. . . .

First Maidservant. Ah! ah! It is opening! it is opening slowly!

Porter. How it shrieks! how it shrieks! It will wake up everybody. . . .

Second Maidservant [*appearing on the threshold*]. Oh, how light it is already out-of-doors!

First Maidservant. The sun is rising on the sea!

Porter. It is open. . . . It is wide open!

[*All the maidservants appear on the threshold and pass over it.*]

First Maidservant. I am going to wash the sill first. . . .

Second Maidservant. We shall never be able to clean all this.

Other Maidservants. Fetch the water! fetch the water!

Porter. Yes, yes; pour on water; pour on water; pour on all the water of the Flood! You will never come to the end of it. . . .

SCENE TWO—*A forest.* MÉLISANDE *discovered at the brink of a spring.*

[*Enter* GOLAUD.]

Golaud. I shall never be able to get out of this forest again.—God knows where that beast has led me. And yet I thought I had wounded him to death; and here are traces of blood. But now I have lost sight of him; I believe I am lost myself—my dogs can no longer find me—I shall retrace my steps. . . . I hear weeping . . . Oh! oh! what is there yonder by the water's edge? . . . A little girl weeping by the water's edge? [*He coughs.*] She does not hear me. I cannot see her face. [*He approaches and touches* MÉLISANDE *on the shoulder.*] Why weepest thou? [MÉLISANDE *trembles, starts up, and would flee.*] Do not be afraid. You have nothing to fear. Why are you weeping here all alone?

Mélisande. Do not touch me! do not touch me!

Golaud. Do not be afraid. . . . I will not do you any . . . Oh, you are beautiful!

Mélisande. Do not touch me! do not touch me! or I throw myself in the water! . . .

Golaud. I will not touch you. . . . See, I will stay here, against the tree. Do not be afraid. Has any one hurt you?

Mélisande. Oh! yes! yes! yes! . . . [*She sobs profoundly.*]

Golaud. Who has hurt you?

Mélisande. Every one! every one!

Golaud. What hurt have they done you?

Mélisande. I will not tell! I cannot tell! . . .

Golaud. Come; do not weep so. Whence come you?

Mélisande. I have fled! . . . fled . . . fled. . . .

Golaud. Yes; but whence have you fled?

Mélisande. I am lost! . . . lost! . . . Oh! oh! lost here. . . . I am not of this place. . . . I was not born here. . . .

Golaud. Whence are you? Where were you born?

Mélisande. Oh! oh! far away from here! . . . far away . . . far away. . . .

Golaud. What is it shining so at the bottom of the water?

Mélisande. Where?—Ah! it is the crown he gave me. It fell as I was weeping. . . .

Golaud. A crown?—Who was it gave you a crown?—I will try to get it. . . .

Mélisande. No, no; I will have no more of it! I will have no more of it! . . . I had rather die. . . . die at once. . . .

Golaud. I could easily pull it out. The water is not very deep.

Mélisande. I will have no more of it! If you take it out, I throw myself in its place! . . .

Golaud. No, no; I will leave it there. It could be reached without difficulty, nevertheless. It seems very beautiful.—Is it long since you fled?

Mélisande. Yes, yes! . . . Who are you?

Golaud. I am Prince Golaud,—grandson of Arkël, the old King of Allemonde.

Mélisande. Oh, you have gray hairs already. . . .

Golaud. Yes; some, here, by the temples . . .

Mélisande. And in your beard, too. . . . Why do you look at me so?

Golaud. I am looking at your eyes.—Do you never shut your eyes?

Mélisande. Oh, yes; I shut them at night. . . .

Golaud. Why do you look so astonished?

Mélisande. You are a giant.

Golaud. I am a man like the rest. . . .

Mélisande. Why have you come here?

Golaud. I do not know, myself. I was hunting in the forest. I was chasing a wild boar. I mistook the road.—You look very young. How old are you?

Mélisande. I am beginning to be cold.

Golaud. Will you come with me?

Mélisande. No, no; I will stay here.

Golaud. You cannot stay here all alone. You cannot stay here all night long. . . . What is your name?

Mélisande. Mélisande.

Golaud. You cannot stay here, Mélisande. Come with me. . . .

Mélisande. I will stay here. . . .

Golaud. You will be afraid, all alone. We do not know what there may be here . . . all night long . . . all alone . . . it is impossible. Mélisande, come, give me your hand. . . .

Mélisande. Oh, do not touch me! . . .

Golaud. Do not scream. . . . I will not touch you again. But come with me. The night will be very dark and very cold. Come with me. . . .

Mélisande. Where are you going? . . .

Golaud. I do not know. . . . I am lost too. . . . [*Exeunt.*]

SCENE THREE—*A hall in the castle.* ARKËL *and* GENEVIÈVE *discovered.*

Geneviève. Here is what he writes to his brother Pelléas: "I found her all in tears one evening, beside a spring in the forest where I had lost myself. I do not know her age, nor who she is, nor whence she comes, and I dare not question her, for she must have had a sore fright; and when you ask her what has happened to her, she falls at once a-weeping like a child, and sobs so heavily you are afraid. Just as I found her by the spring, a crown of gold had slipped from her hair and fallen to the bottom of the water. She was clad, besides, like a princess, though her garments had been torn by the briers. It is now six months since I married her and I know no more about it than on the day of our meeting. Meanwhile, dear Pelléas, thou whom I love more than a brother, although we were not born of the same father; meanwhile make ready for my return. . . . I know my mother will willingly forgive me. But I am afraid of the King, our venerable grandsire, I am afraid of Arkël, in spite of all his kindness, for I have undone by this strange marriage all his plans of state, and I fear the beauty of Mélisande will not excuse my folly to eyes so wise as his. If he consents nevertheless to receive her as he would receive his own daughter, the third night following this letter, light a lamp at the top of the tower that overlooks the sea. I shall perceive it from the bridge of our ship; otherwise I shall go far away again and come back no more. . . ." What say you of it?

Arkël. Nothing. He has done what he probably must have done. I am very old, and nevertheless I have not yet seen clearly for one moment into myself; how would you that I judge what others have done? I am not far from the tomb and do not succeed in judging myself. . . . One always mistakes when one does not close his eyes. That may seem strange to us; but that is all. He is past the age to marry and he weds, like a child, a little girl he finds by a spring. . . . That may seem

strange to us, because we never see but the reverse of destinies . . . the reverse even of our own. . . . He has always followed my counsels hitherto; I had thought to make him happy in sending him to ask the hand of Princess Ursula. . . . He could not remain alone; since the death of his wife he has been sad to be alone; and that marriage would have put an end to long wars and old hatreds. . . . He would not have it so. Let it be as he would have it; I have never put myself athwart a destiny; and he knows better than I his future. There happen perhaps no useless events. . . .

Geneviève. He has always been so prudent, so grave and so firm. . . . If it were Pelléas, I should understand. . . . But he . . . at his age. . . . Who is it he is going to introduce here?—An unknown found along the roads. . . . Since his wife's death, he has no longer lived for aught but his son, the little Yniold, and if he were about to marry again, it was because you had wished it. . . . And now . . . a little girl in the forest. . . . He has forgotten everything. . . .—What shall we do? . . .

[*Enter* PELLÉAS.]

Arkël. Who is coming in there?

Geneviève. It is Pelléas. He has been weeping.

Arkël. Is it thou, Pelléas?—Come a little nearer, that I may see thee in the light. . . .

Pelléas. Grandfather, I received another letter at the same time as my brother's; a letter from my friend Marcellus. . . . He is about to die and calls for me. He would see me before dying. . . .

Arkël. Thou wouldst leave before thy brother's return?—Perhaps thy friend is less ill than he thinks. . . .

Pelléas. His letter is so sad you can see death between the lines. . . . He says he knows the very day when death must come. . . . He tells me I can arrive before it if I will, but that there is no more time to lose. The journey is very long, and if I await Golaud's return, it will be perhaps too late. . . .

Arkël. Thou must wait a little while, nevertheless. . . . We do not know what this return has in store for us. And, besides, is not thy father here, above us, more sick perhaps than thy friend? . . . Couldst thou choose between the father and the friend? . . . [*Exit.*]

Geneviève. Have a care to keep the lamp lit from this evening, Pelléas. . . .

[*Exeunt severally.*]

SCENE FOUR—*Before the castle.*

[*Enter* GENEVIÈVE *and* MÉLISANDE.]

Mélisande. It is gloomy in the gardens. And what forests, what forests all about the palaces. . . .

Geneviève. Yes; that astonished me too when I came hither; it astonishes everybody. There are places where you never see the sun. But one gets used to it so quickly. . . . It is long ago, it is long ago. . . . It is nearly forty years that I have lived here. . . . Look toward the other side, you will have the light of the sea. . . .

Mélisande. I hear a noise below us. . . .

Geneviève. Yes; it is some one coming up toward us. . . . Ah! it is Pelléas. . . . He seems still tired from having waited so long for you. . . .

Mélisande. He has not seen us.

Geneviève. I think he has seen us but does not know what he should do. . . . Pelléas, Pelléas, is it thou? . . .

[*Enter* PELLÉAS.]

Pelléas. Yes! . . . I was coming toward the sea. . . .

Geneviève. So were we; we were seeking the light. It is a little lighter here than elsewhere; and yet the sea is gloomy.

Pelléas. We shall have a storm to-night. There has been one every night for some time, and yet it is so calm now. . . . One might embark unwittingly and come back no more.

Mélisande. Something is leaving the port.

Pelléas. It must be a big ship. . . . The lights are very high, we shall see it in a moment, when it enters the band of light. . . .

Geneviève. I do not know whether we shall be able to see it . . . there is still a fog on the sea. . . .

Pelléas. The fog seems to be rising slowly.

Mélisande. Yes; I see a little light down there, which I had not seen. . . .

Pelléas. It is a lighthouse; there are others we cannot see yet.

Mélisande. The ship is in the light. . . . It is already very far away. . . .

Pelléas. It is a foreign ship. It looks larger than ours. . . .

Mélisande. It is the ship that brought me here! . . .

Pelléas. It flies away under full sail. . . .

Mélisande. It is the ship that brought me

here. It has great sails. . . . I recognized it by its sails.

Pelléas. There will be a rough sea to-night.

Mélisande. Why does it go away to-night? . . . You can hardly see it any longer. . . . Perhaps it will be wrecked. . . .

Pelléas. The night falls very quickly. . . . [*A silence.*]

Geneviève. No one speaks any more? . . . You have nothing more to say to each other? . . . It is time to go in. Pelléas, show Mélisande the way. I must go see little Yniold a moment. [*Exit.*]

Pelléas. Nothing can be seen any longer on the sea. . . .

Mélisande. I see more lights.

Pelléas. It is the other lighthouses. . . . Do you hear the sea? . . . It is the wind rising. . . . Let us go down this way. Will you give me your hand?

Mélisande. See, see, my hands are full. . . .

Pelléas. I will hold you by the arm, the road is steep and it is very gloomy there. . . . I am going away perhaps to-morrow. . . .

Mélisande. Oh! . . . why do you go away? [*Exeunt.*]

ACT TWO

Scene One—*A fountain in the park.*

[*Enter* Pelléas *and* Mélisande.]

Pelléas. You do not know where I have brought you?—I often come to sit here, toward noon, when it is too hot in the gardens. It is stifling to-day, even in the shade of the trees.

Mélisande. Oh, how clear the water is! . . .

Pelléas. It is as cool as winter. It is an old abandoned spring. It seems to have been a miraculous spring,—it opened the eyes of the blind,—they still call it "Blind Man's Spring."

Mélisande. It no longer opens the eyes of the blind?

Pelléas. Since the King has been nearly blind himself, no one comes any more. . . .

Mélisande. How alone one is here! . . . There is no sound.

Pelléas. There is always a wonderful silence here. . . . One could hear the water sleep. . . . Will you sit down on the edge of the marble basin? There is one linden where the sun never comes. . . .

Mélisande. I am going to lie down on the marble.—I should like to see the bottom of the water. . . .

Pelléas. No one has ever seen it. It is as deep, perhaps, as the sea. It is not known whence it comes. Perhaps it comes from the bottom of the earth. . . .

Mélisande. If there were anything shining at the bottom, perhaps one could see it. . . .

Pelléas. Do not lean over so. . . .

Mélisande. I would like to touch the water. . . .

Pelléas. Have a care of slipping. . . . I will hold your hand. . . .

Mélisande. No, no, I would plunge both hands in it. . . . You would say my hands were sick to-day. . . .

Pelléas. Oh! oh! take care! take care! Mélisande! . . . Mélisande! . . . Oh! your hair! . . .

Mélisande [*starting upright*]. I cannot . . . I cannot reach it. . . .

Pelléas. Your hair dipped in the water.

Mélisande. Yes, it is longer than my arms. . . . It is longer than I. . . . [*A silence.*]

Pelléas. It was at the brink of a spring, too, that he found you?

Mélisande. Yes. . . .

Pelléas. What did he say to you?

Mélisande. Nothing;—I no longer remember. . . .

Pelléas. Was he quite near you?

Mélisande. Yes; he would have kissed me.

Pelléas. And you would not?

Mélisande. No.

Pelléas. Why would you not?

Mélisande. Oh! oh! I saw something pass at the bottom of the water. . . .

Pelléas. Take care! take care!—You will fall! What are you playing with?

Mélisande. With the ring he gave me.

Pelléas. Take care; you will lose it. . . .

Mélisande. No, no; I am sure of my hands.

Pelléas. Do not play so, over so deep a water. . . .

Mélisande. My hands do not tremble.

Pelléas. How it shines in the sunlight!—Do not throw it so high in the air. . . .

Mélisande. Oh! . . .

Pelléas. It has fallen?

Mélisande. It has fallen into the water!

Pelléas. Where is it? where is it? . . .

Mélisande. I do not see it sink. . . .

Pelléas. I think I see it shine. . . .

Mélisande. My ring?

Pelléas. Yes, yes; down yonder. . . .

Mélisande. Oh! oh! It is so far away from us! . . . no, no, that is not it . . . that is not it . . . It is lost . . . lost. . . . There is nothing any more but a great circle on the water. . . . What shall we do? What shall we do now?

Pelléas. You need not be so troubled for a ring. It is nothing. . . . We shall find it again, perhaps. Or else we shall find another.

Mélisande. No, no; we shall never find it again; we shall never find any others either. . . . And yet I thought I had it in my hands. . . . I had already shut my hands, and it is fallen in spite of all. . . . I threw it too high, toward the sun. . . .

Pelléas. Come, come, we will come back another day; . . . come, it is time. They will come to meet us. It was striking noon at the moment the ring fell.

Mélisande. What shall we say to Golaud if he asks where it is?

Pelléas. The truth, the truth, the truth.

[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE TWO—*An apartment in the castle.* GOLAUD *discovered, stretched upon his bed;* MÉLISANDE, *by his bedside.*

Golaud. Ah! ah! all goes well; it will amount to nothing. But I cannot understand how it came to pass. I was hunting quietly in the forest. All at once my horse ran away, without cause. Did he see anything unusual? . . . I had just heard the twelve strokes of noon. At the twelfth stroke he suddenly took fright and ran like a blind madman against a tree. I heard no more. I do not yet know what happened. I fell, and he must have fallen on me. I thought I had the whole forest on my breast; I thought my heart was crushed. But my heart is sound. It is nothing, apparently. . . .

Mélisande. Would you like a little water?

Golaud. Thanks, thanks; I am not thirsty.

Mélisande. Would you like another pillow? . . . There is a little spot of blood on this.

Golaud. No, no; it is not worth while. I bled at the mouth just now. I shall bleed again, perhaps. . . .

Mélisande. Are you quite sure? . . . You are not suffering too much?

Golaud. No, no; I have seen a good many more like this. I was made of iron and blood. . . . These are not the little bones of a child; do not alarm yourself. . . .

Mélisande. Close your eyes and try to sleep. I shall stay here all night. . . .

Golaud. No, no; I do not wish you to tire yourself so. I do not need anything; I shall sleep like a child. . . . What is the matter, Mélisande? Why do you weep all at once?

Mélisande [*bursting into tears*]. I am . . . I am ill too. . . .

Golaud. Thou art ill? . . . What ails thee, then; what ails thee, Mélisande? . . .

Mélisande. I do not know. . . . I am ill here. . . . I had rather tell you to-day; my lord, my lord, I am not happy here. . . .

Golaud. Why, what has happened, Mélisande? What is it? . . . And I suspecting nothing. . . . What has happened? . . . Some one has done thee harm? . . . Some one has given thee offense?

Mélisande. No, no; no one has done me the least harm. . . . It is not that. . . . It is not that. . . . But I can live here no longer. I do not know why. . . . I would go away, go away! . . . I shall die if I am left here. . . .

Golaud. But something has happened? You must be hiding something from me? . . . Tell me the whole truth, Mélisande. . . . Is it the King? . . . Is it my mother? . . . Is it Pelléas? . . .

Mélisande. No, no; it is not Pelléas. It is not anybody. . . . You could not understand me. . . .

Golaud. Why should I not understand? . . . If you tell me nothing, what will you have me do? . . . Tell me everything and I shall understand everything.

Mélisande. I do not know myself what it is. . . . I do not know just what it is. . . . If I could tell you, I would tell you. . . . It is something stronger than I. . . .

Golaud. Come; be reasonable, Mélisande. —What would you have me do?—You are no longer a child.—Is it I whom you would leave?

Mélisande. Oh! no, no; it is not that. . . . I would go away with you. . . . It is here that I can live no longer. . . . I feel that I shall not live a long while. . . .

Golaud. But there must be a reason, nevertheless. You will be thought mad. It will be thought child's dreams.—Come, is it Pelléas, perhaps?—I think he does not often speak to you.

Mélisande. Yes, yes; he speaks to me sometimes. I think he does not like me; I have seen it in his eyes. . . . But he speaks to me when he meets me. . . .

Golaud. You must not take it ill of him

He has always been so. He is a little strange. And just now he is sad; he thinks of his friend Marcellus, who is at the point of death, and whom he cannot go to see. . . . He will change, he will change, you will see; he is young. . . .

Mélisande. But it is not that . . . it is not that. . . .

Golaud. What is it, then?—Can you not get used to the life one leads here? Is it too gloomy here?—It is true the castle is very old and very somber. . . . It is very cold, and very deep. And all those who dwell in it are already old. And the country may seem gloomy too, with all its forests, all its old forests without light. But that may all be enlivened if we will. And then, joy, joy, one does not have it every day; we must take things as they come. But tell me something; no matter what; I will do everything you could wish. . . .

Mélisande. Yes, yes; it is true. . . . You never see the sky here. I saw it for the first time this morning. . . .

Golaud. It is that, then, that makes you weep, my poor Mélisande?—It is only that, then?—You weep, not to see the sky?—Come, come, you are no longer at the age when one may weep for such things. . . . And then, is not the summer yonder? You will see the sky every day.—And then, next year. . . . Come, give me your hand; give me both your little hands. [*He takes her hands.*] Oh! oh! these little hands that I could crush like flowers. . . .—Hold! where is the ring I gave you?

Mélisande. The ring?

Golaud. Yes; our wedding-ring, where is it?

Mélisande. I think . . . I think it has fallen. . . .

Golaud. Fallen?—Where has it fallen?—You have not lost it?

Mélisande. No, no; it fell . . . it must have fallen . . . but I know where it is. . . .

Golaud. Where is it?

Mélisande. You know . . . you know well . . . the grotto by the seashore? . . .

Golaud. Yes.

Mélisande. Well then, it is there. . . . It must be it is there. . . . Yes, yes; I remember. . . . I went there this morning to pick up shells for little Yniold. . . . There were some very fine ones. . . . It slipped from my finger . . . then the sea came in; and I had to go out before I had found it.

Golaud. Are you sure it is there?

Mélisande. Yes, yes; quite sure. . . . I felt it slip . . . then, all at once, the noise of the waves. . . .

Golaud. You must go look for it at once.

Mélisande. I must go look for it at once?

Golaud. Yes.

Mélisande. Now?—at once?—in the dark?

Golaud. Now, at once, in the dark. You must go look for it at once. I had rather have lost all I have than have lost that ring. You do not know what it is. You do not know whence it came. The sea will be very high to-night. The sea will come to take it before you. . . . Make haste. You must go look for it at once. . . .

Mélisande. I dare not. . . . I dare not go alone. . . .

Golaud. Go, go with no matter whom. But you must go at once, do you understand?—Make haste; ask Pelléas to go with you.

Mélisande. Pelléas?—With Pelléas?—But Pélléas would not. . . .

Golaud. Pelléas will do all you ask of him. I know Pelléas better than you do. Go, go; hurry! I shall not sleep until I have the ring.

Mélisande. Oh! oh! I am not happy! . . . I am not happy! . . . [*Exit, weeping.*]

Scene Three—*Before a grotto.*

[*Enter* Pelléas *and* Mélisande.]

Pelléas [*speaking with great agitation*]. Yes; it is here; we are there. It is so dark you cannot tell the entrance of the grotto from the rest of the night. . . . There are no stars on this side. Let us wait till the moon has torn through that great cloud; it will light up the whole grotto, and then we can enter without danger. There are dangerous places, and the path is very narrow between two lakes whose bottom has not yet been found. I did not think to bring a torch or a lantern, but I think the light of the sky will be enough for us.—You have never gone into this grotto?

Mélisande. No. . . .

Pelléas. Let us go in; let us go in. . . . You must be able to describe the place where you lost the ring, if he questions you. . . . It is very big and very beautiful. There are stalactites that look like plants and men. It is full of blue darks. It has not been explored to the end. There are great treasures hidden there; it seems. You will see the remains of ancient shipwrecks there. But you must not

go far in it without a guide. There have been some who never have come back. I myself dare not go forward too far. We will stop the moment we no longer see the light of the sea or the sky. When you strike a little light there, you would say the vault was covered with stars like the sky. It is bits of crystal or salt, they say, that shine so in the rock.—Look, look, I think the sky is going to clear. . . . Give me your hand; do not tremble, do not tremble so. There is no danger; we will stop the moment we no longer see the light of the sea. . . . Is it the noise of the grotto that frightens you? It is the noise of night or the noise of silence. . . . Do you hear the sea behind us?—It does not seem happy to-night. . . . Ah! look, the light! . . .

[*The moon lights up abundantly the entrance and part of the darkness of the grotto; and at a certain depth are seen three old beggars with white hair, seated side by side, leaning upon each other and asleep against a boulder.*]

Mélisande. Ah!

Pelléas. What is it?

Mélisande. There are . . . there are. . . . [*She points out the three beggars.*]

Pelléas. Yes, yes; I have seen them too. . . .

Mélisande. Let us go! . . . Let us go! . . .

Pelléas. Yes . . . it is three old poor men fallen asleep. . . . There is a famine in the country. . . . Why have they come to sleep here? . . .

Mélisande. Let us go! . . . Come, come. . . . Let us go! . . .

Pelléas. Take care; do not speak so loud. . . . Let us not wake them. . . . They are still sleeping heavily. . . . Come.

Mélisande. Leave me, leave me; I prefer to walk alone. . . .

Pelléas. We will come back another day. [*Exeunt.*]

SCENE FOUR—*An apartment in the castle.* ARKËL AND PELLÉAS *discovered.*

Arkël. You see that everything retains you here just now and forbids you this useless journey. We have concealed your father's condition from you until now; but it is perhaps hopeless; and that alone should suffice to stop you on the threshold. But there are so many other reasons. . . . And it is not in the day when our enemies awake, and when the people are dying of hunger and murmur about us, that you have the right to desert us. And why this journey? Marcellus is dead; and life has graver duties than the visit to a tomb. You are weary, you say, of your inactive life; but activity and duty are not found on the highways. They must be waited for upon the threshold, and let in as they go by; and they go by every day. You have never seen them? I hardly see them any more myself; but I will teach you to see them, and I will point them out to you the day when you would make them a sign. Nevertheless, listen to me; if you believe it is from the depths of your life this journey is exacted, I do not forbid your undertaking it, for you must know better than I the events you must offer to your being or your fate. I shall ask you only to wait until we know what must take place ere long. . . .

Pelléas. How long must I wait?

Arkël. A few weeks; perhaps a few days. . . .

Pelléas. I will wait. . . .

ACT THREE

SCENE ONE—*An apartment in the castle.* PELLÉAS *and* MÉLISANDE *discovered.* MÉLISANDE *plies her distaff at the back of the room.*

Pelléas. Yniold does not come back; where has he gone?

Mélisande. He has heard something in the corridor; he has gone to see what it is.

Pelléas. Mélisande . . .

Mélisande. What is it?

Pelléas. . . . Can you see still to work there?

Mélisande. I work as well in the dark. . . .

Pelléas. I think everybody is already asleep in the castle. Golaud does not come back from the chase. It is late, nevertheless. . . . He no longer suffers from his fall?

Mélisande. He said he no longer suffered from it.

Pelléas. He must be more prudent; his body is no longer as supple as at twenty years. . . . I see the stars through the window and the light of the moon on the trees. It is late; he will not come back now. [*Knocking at the door.*] Who is there? . . . Come in! . . .

[*Little* YNIOLD *opens the door and enters the room.*]

It was you knocking so? . . . That is not

the way to knock at doors. It is as if a misfortune had arrived; look, you have frightened little mother.

Yniold. I only knocked a tiny little bit.

Pelléas. It is late; little father will not come back to-night; it is time for you to go to bed.

Yniold. I shall not go to bed before you do.

Pelléas. What? . . . What is that you are saying?

Yniold. I say . . . not before you . . . not before you . . .

[*Bursts into sobs and takes refuge by* MÉLISANDE.]

Mélisande. What is it, Yniold? . . . What is it? why do you weep all at once?

Yniold [*sobbing*]. Because . . . oh! oh! because . . .

Mélisande. Because what? . . . Because what? . . . Tell me . . .

Yniold. Little mother . . . little mother . . . you are going away. . . .

Mélisande. But what has taken hold of you, Yniold? . . . I have never dreamed of going away. . . .

Yniold. Yes, you have; yes, you have; little father has gone away. . . . Little father does not come back, and you are going to go away too. . . . I have seen it . . . I have seen it. . . .

Mélisande. But there has never been any idea of that, Yniold. . . . Why, what makes you think that I would go away? . . .

Yniold. I have seen it . . . I have seen it. . . . You have said things to uncle that I could not hear . . .

Pelléas. He is sleepy. . . . He has been dreaming. . . . Come here, Yniold; asleep already? . . . Come and look out at the window; the swans are fighting with the dogs. . . .

Yniold [*at the window*]. Oh! oh! they are chasing the dogs! . . . They are chasing them! . . . Oh! oh! the water! . . . the wings! . . . the wings! . . . they are afraid. . . .

Pelléas [*coming back by* MÉLISANDE]. He is sleepy; he is struggling against sleep; his eyes were closing. . . .

Mélisande [*singing softly as she spins*].

Saint Daniel and Saint Michaël. . . .

Saint Michaël and Saint Raphaël. . . .

Yniold [*at the window*]. Oh! oh! little mother! . . .

Mélisande [*rising abruptly*]. What is it, Yniold? . . . What is it? . . .

Yniold. I saw something at the window!

[PELLÉAS *and* MÉLISANDE *run to the window.*]

Pelléas. What is there at the window? . . . What have you seen? . . .

Yniold. Oh! oh! I saw something! . . .

Pelléas. But there is nothing. I see nothing. . . .

Mélisande. Nor I. . . .

Pelléas. Where did you see something? Which way? . . .

Yniold. Down there, down there! . . . It is no longer there. . . .

Pelléas. He does not know what he is saying. He must have seen the light of the moon on the forest. There are often strange reflections . . . or else something must have passed on the highway . . . or in his sleep. For see, see, I believe he is quite asleep. . . .

Yniold [*at the window*]. Little father is there! little father is there!

Pelléas [*going to the window*]. He is right; Golaud is coming into the courtyard.

Yniold. Little father! . . . little father! . . . I am going to meet him! . . . [*Exit, running.—A silence.*]

Pelléas. They are coming up the stair.

[*Enter* GOLAUD *and little* YNIOLD *with a lamp.*]

Golaud. You are still waiting in the dark?

Yniold. I have brought a light, little mother, a big light! . . . [*He lifts the lamp and looks at* MÉLISANDE.] You have been weeping, little mother? . . . You have been weeping? . . . [*He lifts the lamp toward* PELLÉAS *and looks in turn at him.*] You too, you too, you have been weeping? . . . Little father, look, little father; they have both been weeping. . . .

Golaud. Do not hold the light under their eyes so. . . .

SCENE TWO—*One of the towers of the castle. A watchman's round passes under a window in the tower.*

Mélisande [*at the window, combing her unbound hair*].

My long locks fall foaming
To the threshold of the tower,—
My locks await your coming
All along the tower,
And all the long, long hour,
And all the long, long hour.

Saint Daniel and Saint Michaël,
Saint Michaël and Saint Raphaël.

I was born on a Sunday,
A Sunday at high noon. . . .

[*Enter* PELLÉAS *by the watchman's round.*]

Pelléas. Holà! Holà! ho! . . .

Mélisande. Who is there?

Pelléas. I, I, and I! . . . What art thou doing there at the window, singing like a bird that is not native here?

Mélisande. I am doing my hair for the night. . . .

Pelléas. Is it that I see upon the wall? . . . I thought you had some light. . . .

Mélisande. I have opened the window; it is too hot in the tower. . . . It is beautiful to-night. . . .

Pelléas. There are innumerable stars; I have never seen so many as to-night; . . . but the moon is still upon the sea. . . . Do not stay in the shadow, Mèlisande; lean forward a little till I see your unbound hair. . . .

Mélisande. I am frightful so. . . . [*She leans out at the window.*]

Pelléas. Oh! oh! Mèlisande! . . . oh, thou art beautiful! . . . thou art beautiful so! . . . Lean out! lean out! . . . Let me come nearer thee . . .

Mélisande. I cannot come nearer thee. . . . I am leaning out as far as I can. . . .

Pelléas. I cannot come up higher; . . . give me at least thy hand to-night . . . before I go away. . . . I leave to-morrow. . . .

Mélisande. No, no, no! . . .

Pelléas. Yes, yes, yes; I leave, I shall leave to-morrow. . . . Give me thy hand, thy hand, thy little hand upon my lips. . . .

Mélisande. I give thee not my hand if thou wilt leave. . . .

Pelléas. Give, give, give! . . .

Mélisande. Thou wilt not leave?

Pelléas. I will wait; I will wait. . . .

Mélisande. I see a rose in the shadows.

Pelléas. Where? . . . I see only the boughs of the willow hanging over the wall. . . .

Mélisande. Farther down, farther down, in the garden; farther down, in the somber green. . . .

Pelléas. It is not a rose. . . . I will go see by and by, but give me thy hand first; first thy hand. . . .

Mélisande. There, there; . . . I cannot lean out farther. . . .

Pelléas. I cannot reach thy hand with my lips. . . .

Mélisande. I cannot lean out farther. . . . I am on the point of falling. . . . —Oh! oh! my hair is falling down the tower! [*Her tresses fall suddenly over her head, as she is leaning out so, and stream over* PELLÉAS.]

Pelléas. Oh! oh! what is it? . . . Thy hair, thy hair is falling down to me! . . . All thy locks, Mélisande, all thy locks have fallen down the tower! . . . I hold them in my hands; I hold them in my mouth. . . . I hold them in my arms; I put them about my neck. . . . I will not open my hands again to-night. . . .

Mélisande. Let me go! let me go! . . . Thou wilt make me fall! . . .

Pelléas. No, no, no; . . . I have never seen such hair as thine, Mélisande! . . . See, see, see; it comes from so high and yet it floods me to the heart! . . . And yet it floods me to the knees! . . . And it is sweet, sweet as if it fell from heaven! . . . I see the sky no longer through thy locks. Thou seest, thou seest? . . . I can no longer hold them with both hands; there are some on the boughs of the willow. . . . They are alive like birds in my hands, . . . and they love me, they love me more than thou! . . .

Mélisande. Let me go; let me go! . . . Some one might come. . . .

Pelléas. No, no, no; I shall not set thee free to-night. . . . Thou art my prisoner to-night; all night, all night! . . .

Mélisande. Pelléas! Pelléas! . . .

Pelléas. I tie them, I tie them to the willow boughs. . . . Thou shalt not go away now; . . . thou shalt not go away now. . . . Look, look, I am kissing thy hair. . . . I suffer no more in the midst of thy hair. . . . Hearest thou my kisses along thy hair? . . . They mount along thy hair. . . . Each hair must bring thee some. . . . Thou seest, thou seest, I can open my hands. . . . My hands are free, and thou canst not leave me now. . . .

Mélisande. Oh! oh! thou hurtest me. . . . [*Doves come out of the tower and fly about them in the night.*]—What is that, Pelléas?—What is it flying about me?

Pelléas. It is the doves coming out of the tower. . . . I have frightened them; they are flying away. . . .

Mélisande. It is my doves, Pelléas.—Let us go away, let me go; they will not come back again. . . .

Pelléas. Why will they not come back again?

Mélisande. They will be lost in the dark. . . . Let me go; let me lift my head. . . . I hear a noise of footsteps. . . . Let me go!—It is Golaud! . . . I believe it is Golaud! . . . He has heard us. . . .

Pelléas. Wait! Wait! . . . Thy hair is about the boughs. . . . It is caught there in the darkness. . . . Wait, wait! . . . It is dark.

[*Enter* GOLAUD, *by the watchman's round.*]

Golaud. What do you here?

Pelléas. What do I here? . . . I . . .

Golaud. You are children. . . . Mélisande, do not lean out so at the window; you will fall. . . . Do you not know it is late? It is nearly midnight.—Do not play so in the darkness.—You are children. . . . [*Laughing nervously.*] What children! . . . What children! . . . [*Exit, with* PELLÉAS.]

SCENE THREE—*The vaults of the castle.*

[*Enter* GOLAUD *and* PELLÉAS.]

Golaud. Take care; this way, this way.—You have never penetrated into these vaults?

Pelléas. Yes; once, of old; but it was long ago. . . .

Golaud. They are prodigious great; it is a succession of enormous crypts that end, God knows where. The whole castle is builded on these crypts. Do you smell the deathly odor that reigns here?—That is what I wished to show you. In my opinion, it comes from the little underground lake I am going to have you see. Take care; walk before me, in the light of my lantern. I will warn you when we are there. [*They continue to walk in silence.*] Hey! hey! Pelléas! stop! stop! [*He seizes him by the arm.*] For God's sake! . . . Do you not see?—One step more, and you had been in the gulf! . . .

Pelléas. But I did not see it! . . . The lantern no longer lighted me. . . .

Golaud. I made a misstep . . . but if I had not held you by the arm . . . Well, this is the stagnant water that I spoke of to you. . . . Do you perceive the smell of death that rises?—Let us go to the end of this overhanging rock, and do you lean over a little. It will strike you in the face.

Pelléas. I smell it already; . . . you would say a smell of the tomb.

Golaud. Farther, farther. . . . It is this that on certain days has poisoned the castle. The King will not believe it comes from here.—The crypt should be walled up in which this standing water is found. It is time, besides, to examine these vaults a little. Have you noticed those lizards on the walls and pillars of the vaults?—There is a labor hidden here you would not suspect; and the whole castle will be swallowed up one of these nights, if it is not looked out for. But what will you have? Nobody likes to come down this far. . . . There are strange lizards in many of the walls. . . . Oh! here . . . do you perceive the smell of death that rises?

Pelléas. Yes; there is a smell of death rising about us. . . .

Golaud. Lean over; have no fear. . . . I will hold you . . . give me . . . no, no, not your hand . . . it might slip . . . your arm, your arm! . . . Do you see the gulf? [*Moved.*] —Pelléas? Pelléas? . . .

Pelléas. Yes; I think I see the bottom of the gulf. . . . Is it the light that trembles so? . . . You . . . [*He straightens up, turns, and looks at* GOLAUD.]

Golaud [*with a trembling voice*]. Yes; it is the lantern. . . . See, I shook it to lighten the walls. . . .

Pelléas. I stifle here; . . . let us go out. . . .

Golaud. Yes; let us go out. . . .

[*Exeunt in silence.*]

SCENE FOUR—*A terrace at the exit of the vaults.*

[*Enter* GOLAUD *and* PELLÉAS.]

Pelléas. Ah! I breathe at last! . . . I thought, one moment, I was going to be ill in those enormous crypts; I was on the point of falling. . . . There is a damp air there, heavy as a leaden dew, and darkness thick as a poisoned paste. . . . And now, all the air of all the sea! . . . There is a fresh wind, see; fresh as a leaf that has just opened, over the little green waves. . . . Hold! the flowers have just been watered at the foot of the terrace, and the smell of the verdure and the wet roses comes up to us. . . . It must be nearly noon; they are already in the shadow of the tower. . . . It is noon; I hear the bells ringing, and the children are going down to the beach to bathe. . . . I did not know that we had stayed so long in the caverns. . . .

Golaud. We went down toward eleven o'clock. . . .

Pelléas. Earlier; it must have been earlier; I heard it strike half past ten.

Golaud. Half past ten or a quarter to eleven. . . .

Pelléas. They have opened all the windows of the castle. It will be unusually hot this afternoon. . . . Look, there is mother with Mélisande at a window of the tower. . . .

Golaud. Yes; they have taken refuge on the shady side.—Speaking of Mélisande, I heard what passed and what was said last night. I am quite aware all that is but child's play; but it need not be repeated. Mélisande is very young and very impressionable; and she must be treated the more circumspectly that she is perhaps with child at this moment. . . . She is very delicate, hardly woman; and the least emotion might bring on a mishap. It is not the first time I have noticed there might be something between you. . . . You are older than she; it will suffice to have told you. . . . Avoid her as much as possible; without affectation, moreover; without affectation. . . .—What is it I see yonder on the highway toward the forest? . . .

Pelléas. Some herds they are leading to the city. . . .

Golaud. They cry like lost children; you would say they smelt the butcher already.—It will be time for dinner.—What a fine day! What a capital day for the harvest! . . .

[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE FIVE—*Before the castle.*

[*Enter* GOLAUD *and little* YNIOLD.]

Golaud. Come, we are going to sit down here, Yniold; sit on my knee; we shall see from here what passes in the forest. I do not see you any more at all now. You abandon me too; you are always at little mother's. . . . Why, we are sitting just under little mother's windows.—Perhaps she is saying her evening prayer at this moment. . . . But tell me, Yniold, she is often with your uncle Pelléas, isn't she?

Yniold. Yes, yes; always, little father; when you are not there, little father. . . .

Golaud. Ah!—Look; some one is going by with a lantern in the garden.—But I have been told they did not like each other. . . . It seems they often quarrel; . . . no? Is it true?

Yniold. Yes, yes; it is true.

Golaud. Yes?—Ah! ah!—But what do they quarrel about?

Yniold. About the door.

Golaud. What?—about the door?—What are you talking about?—No, come, explain yourself; why do they quarrel about the door?

Yniold. Because it won't stay open.

Golaud. Who wants it to stay open?—Come, why do they quarrel?

Yniold. I don't know, little father; about the light.

Golaud. I am not talking to you about the light; we will talk of that by and by. I am talking to you about the door. Answer what I ask you; you must learn to talk; it is time. . . . Do not put your hand in your mouth so; . . . come. . . .

Yniold. Little father! little father! . . . I won't do it any more. . . .[*He cries.*]

Golaud. Come; what are you crying for now? What has happened?

Yniold. Oh! oh! little father, you hurt me.

Golaud. I hurt you?—Where did I hurt you? I did not mean to. . . .

Yniold. Here, here; on my little arm. . . .

Golaud. I did not mean to; come, don't cry any more, and I will give you something to-morrow.

Yniold. What, little father?

Golaud. A quiver and some arrows; but tell me what you know about the door.

Yniold. Big arrows?

Golaud. Yes, yes; very big arrows.—But why don't they want the door to be open?—Come, answer me sometime!—No, no; do not open your mouth to cry. I am not angry. We are going to have a quiet talk, like Pelléas and little mother when they are together. What do they talk about when they are together?

Yniold. Pelléas and little mother?

Golaud. Yes; what do they talk about?

Yniold. About me; always about me.

Golaud. And what do they say about you?

Yniold. They say I am going to be very big.

Golaud. Oh, plague of my life! . . . I am here like a blind man searching for his treasure at the bottom of the ocean! . . . I am here like a new-born child lost in the forest, and you . . . Come, come, Yniold, I was wandering; we are going to talk seriously. Do Pelléas and little mother never speak of me when I am not there? . . .

Yniold. Yes, yes, little father; they are always speaking of you.

Golaud. Ah! . . . And what do they say of me?

Yniold. They say I shall grow as big as you are.

Golaud. You are always by them?

Yniold. Yes, yes, always, always, little father.

Golaud. They never tell you to go play somewhere else?

Yniold. No, little father; they are afraid when I am not there.

Golaud. They are afraid? . . . What makes you think they are afraid?

Yniold. Little mother always says, "Don't go away; don't go away!" . . . They are unhappy, but they laugh. . . .

Golaud. But that does not prove they are afraid.

Yniold. Yes, yes, little father; she is afraid. . . .

Golaud. Why do you say she is afraid?

Yniold. They always weep in the dark.

Golaud. Ah! ah! . . .

Yniold. That makes one weep too.

Golaud. Yes, yes! . . .

Yniold. She is pale, little father.

Golaud. Ah! ah! . . . patience, my God, patience! . . .

Yniold. What, little father?

Golaud. Nothing, nothing, my child.—I saw a wolf go by in the forest.—Then they get on well together?—I am glad to learn they are on good terms.—They kiss each other sometimes?—No? . . .

Yniold. Kiss each other, little father?—No, no,—ah! yes, little father, yes, yes; once . . . once when it rained. . . .

Golaud. They kissed?—But how, how did they kiss?

Yniold. So, little father, so! . . . [*He gives him a kiss on the mouth, laughing.*] Ah! ah! your beard, little father! . . . It pricks! it pricks! it pricks! It is gettng all gray, little father, and your hair, too; all gray, all gray, all gray. . . . [*The window under which they are sitting is lighted up at this moment, and the light falls upon them.*] Ah! ah! little mother has lit her lamp. It is light, little father; it is light. . . .

Golaud. Yes; it is beginning to be light.

Yniold. Let us go there, too, little father; let us go there, too. . . .

Golaud. Where do you want to go?

Yniold. Where it is light, little father.

Golaud. No, no, my child; let us stay in the dark a little longer. . . . One cannot tell, one cannot tell yet. . . . Do you see those poor people down there trying to kindle a little fire in the forest?—It has rained. And over there, do you see the old gardener trying to lift that tree the wind has blown down across the road?—He cannot; the tree is too big; the tree is too heavy, and it will lie where it fell. All that cannot be helped. . . . I think Pelléas is mad. . . .

Yniold. No, little father, he is not mad; he is very good.

Golaud. Do you want to see little mother?

Yniold. Yes, yes; I want to see her!

Golaud. Don't make any noise; I am going to hoist you up to the window. It is too high for me, for all I am so big. . . . [*He lifts the child.*] Do not make the least noise; little mother would be terribly afraid. . . . Do you see her?—Is she in the room?

Yniold. Yes. . . . Oh, how light it is!

Golaud. She is alone?

Yniold. Yes; . . . no, no: Uncle Pelléas is there, too.

Golaud. He— . . . !

Yniold. Ah! ah! little father! you have hurt me! . . .

Golaud. It is nothing; be still; I will not do it any more; look, look, Yniold! . . . I stumbled; speak lower. What are they doing?—

Yniold. They are not doing anything, little father; they are waiting for something.

Golaud. Are they near each other?

Yniold. No, little father.

Golaud. And . . . and the bed? Are they near the bed?

Yniold. The bed, little father?—I can't see the bed.

Golaud. Lower, lower; they will hear you. Are they speaking?

Yniold. No, little father; they do not speak.

Golaud. But what are they doing?—They must be doing something. . . .

Yniold. They are looking at the light.

Golaud. Both?

Yniold. Yes, little father.

Golaud. They do not say anything?

Yniold. No, little father; they do not close their eyes.

Golaud. They do not come near each other?

Yniold. No, little father; they do not stir.

Golaud. They are sitting down?

Yniold. No, little father; they are standing upright against the wall.

Golaud. They make no gestures?—They

do not look at each other?—They make no signs? . . .

Yniold. No, little father.—Oh! oh! little father; they never close their eyes. . . . I am terribly afraid. . . .

Golaud. Be still. They do not stir yet?

Yniold. No, little father.—I am afraid, little father; let me come down! . . .

Golaud. Why, what are you afraid of?—Look! look! . . .

Yniold. I dare not look any more, little father! . . . Let me come down! . . .

Golaud. Look! look! . . .

Yniold. Oh! oh! I am going to cry, little father!—Let me come down! let me come down! . . .

Golaud. Come; we will go see what has happened. [*Exeunt.*]

ACT FOUR

Scene One—*A corridor in the castle.*

[*Enter* Pelléas *and* Mélisande, *meeting.*]

Pelléas. Where goest thou? I must speak to thee to-night. Shall I see thee?

Mélisande. Yes.

Pelléas. I have just left my father's room. He is getting better. The physician has told us he is saved. . . . And yet this morning I had a presentiment this day would end ill. I have had a rumor of misfortune in my ears for some time. . . . Then, all at once there was a great change; to-day it is no longer anything but a question of time. All the windows in his room have been thrown open. He speaks; he seems happy. He does not speak yet like an ordinary man, but already his ideas no longer all come from the other world. . . . He recognized me. He took my hand and said with that strange air he has had since he fell sick: "Is it thou, Pélléas? Why, why, I had not noticed it before, but thou hast the grave and friendly look of those who will not live long. . . . You must travel; you must travel. . . ." It is strange; I shall obey him. . . . My mother listened to him and wept for joy.—Hast thou not been aware of it?—The whole house seems already to revive, you hear breathing, you hear speaking, you hear walking. . . . Listen; I hear some one speaking behind that door. Quick, quick! answer quickly! where shall I see thee?

Mélisande. Where wouldst thou?

Pelléas. In the park; near "Blind Man's Spring."—Wilt thou?—Wilt thou come?

Mélisande. Yes.

Pelléas. It will be the last night;—I am going to travel, as my father said. Thou wilt not see me more. . . .

Mélisande. Do not say that, Pelléas. . . . I shall see thee always; I shall look upon thee always. . . .

Pelléas. Thou wilt look in vain. . . . I shall be so far away thou couldst no longer see me. . . . I shall try to go very far away. . . . I am full of joy, and you would say I had all the weight of heaven and earth on my body to-day. . . .

Mélisande. What has happened, Pelléas? —I no longer understand what you say. . . .

Pelléas. Go, go; let us separate. I hear some one speaking behind that door. . . . It is the strangers who came to the castle this morning. . . . They are going out. . . . Let us go; it is the strangers. . . .

[*Exeunt severally.*]

Scene Two—*An apartment in the castle.* Arkël *and* Mélisande *discovered.*

Arkël. Now that Pelléas's father is saved, and sickness, the old handmaid of Death, has left the castle, a little joy and a little sunlight will at last come into the house again. . . . It was time!—For, since thy coming, we have only lived here whispering about a closed room. . . . And truly I have pitied thee, Mélisande. . . . Thou camest here all joyous, like a child seeking a gala-day, and at the moment thou enteredst in the vestibule I saw thy face change, and probably thy soul, as the face changes in spite of us when we enter at noon into a grotto too gloomy and too cold. . . . And since,—since, on account of all that, I have often no longer understood thee. . . . I observed thee, thou wert there, listless, perhaps, but with the strange, astray look of one awaiting ever a great trouble, in the sunlight, in a beautiful garden. . . . I cannot explain. . . . But I was sad to see thee so; for thou art too young and too beautiful to live already day and night under the breath of death. . . . But now all that will change. At my age, —and there, perhaps, is the surest fruit of my life,—at my age I have gained I know not what faith in the fidelity of events, and I have always seen that every young and beautiful being creates about itself young, beautiful,

and happy events. . . . And it is thou who wilt now open the door for the new era I have glimpses of. . . . Come here; why dost thou stay there without answering and without lifting thine eyes?—I have kissed thee but once only hitherto—the day of thy coming; and yet old men need sometimes to touch with their lips a woman's forehead or a child's cheek, to believe still in the freshness of life and avert awhile the menaces. . . . Art thou afraid of my old lips? How I have pitied thee these months! . . .

Mélisande. Grandfather, I have not been unhappy. . . .

Arkël. Perhaps you were of those who are unhappy without knowing it, . . . and they are the most unhappy. . . . Let me look at thee, so, quite near, a moment; . . . we have such need of beauty beside Death. . . .

[*Enter* GOLAUD.]

Golaud. Pelléas leaves to-night.

Arkël. Thou hast blood on thy forehead.—What hast thou done?

Golaud. Nothing, nothing. . . . I have passed through a hedge of thorns.

Mélisande. Bend down your head a little, my lord. . . . I will wipe your forehead. . . .

Golaud [*repulsing her*]. I will not that you touch me, do you understand? Go, go!—I am not speaking to you.—Where is my sword?—I came to seek my sword. . . .

Mélisande. Here; on the praying-stool.

Golaud. Bring it. [*To* ARKËL.] They have just found another peasant dead of hunger, along by the sea. You would say they all meant to die under our eyes. [*To* MÉLISANDE.] Well, my sword?—Why do you tremble so?—I am not going to kill you. I would simply examine the blade. I do not employ the sword for these uses. Why do you examine me like a beggar?—I do not come to ask alms of you. You hope to see something in my eyes without my seeing anything in yours?—Do you think I may know something? [*To* ARKËL.]—Do you see those great eyes?—It is as if they were proud of their richness. . . .

Arkël. I see there only a great innocence. . . .

Golaud. A great innocence! . . . They are greater than innocence. . . . They are purer than the eyes of a lamb. . . . They would give God lessons in innocence! A great innocence! Listen: I am so near them I feel the freshness of their lashes when they wink; and yet I am less far away from the great secrets of the other world than from the smallest secret of those eyes! . . . A great innocence! . . . More than innocence! You would say the angels of heaven celebrated there an eternal baptism! . . . I know those eyes! I have seen them at their work! Close them! close them! or I shall close them for a long while! . . . Do not put your right hand to your throat so; I am saying a very simple thing. . . . I have no under-thought. . . . If I had an under-thought, why should I not say it? Ah! ah!—Do not attempt to flee!—Here!—Give me that hand!—Ah! your hands are too hot. . . . Go away! Your flesh disgusts me! . . . Here!—There is no more question of fleeing now! [*He seizes her by the hair.*] You shall follow me on your knees!—On your knees!—On your knees before me!—Ah! ah! your long hair serves some purpose at last! . . . Right, . . . left!—Left, . . . right!—Absalom! Absalom.—Forward! back! To the ground! to the ground! . . . You see, you see; I laugh already like an old man. . . .

Arkël [*running up*]. Golaud! . . .

Golaud [*affecting a sudden calm*]. You will do as you may please, look you.—I attach no importance to that.—I am too old; and, besides, I am not a spy. I shall await chance; and then . . . Oh! then! . . . simply because it is the custom; simply because it is the custom. . . . [*Exit.*]

Arkël. What ails him?—He is drunk?

Mélisande [*in tears*]. No, no; he does not love me any more. . . . I am not happy! . . . I am not happy! . . .

Arkël. If I were God, I would have pity on men's hearts. . . .

SCENE THREE—*A terrace of the castle. Little* YNIOLD *discovered, trying to lift a boulder.*

Yniold. Oh, this stone is heavy! . . . It is heavier than I am. . . . It is heavier than everybody. . . . It is heavier than everything that ever happened. . . . I can see my golden ball between the rock and this naughty stone, and I cannot reach it. . . . My little arm is not long enough, . . . and this stone won't be lifted. . . . I can't lift it, . . . and nobody could lift it. . . . It is heavier than the whole house; . . . you would think it had roots in the earth. . . . [*The bleatings of a flock heard far away.*]—Oh! oh! I hear the sheep crying. . . . [*He goes to look, at the edge of the terrace.*] Why! there is no more sun. . . . They are coming . . . the little sheep . . . they are com-

ing. . . . There is a lot of them! . . . There is a lot of them! . . . They are afraid of the dark. . . . They crowd together! They crowd together! . . . They can hardly walk any more. . . . They are crying! They are crying! And they go quick! . . . They go quick! . . . They are already at the great crossroads. Ah! ah! They don't know where they ought to go any more. . . . They don't cry any more. . . . They wait. . . . Some of them want to go to the right. . . . They all want to go to the right. . . . They cannot! . . . The shepherd is throwing earth at them. . . . Ah! ah! They are going to pass by here. . . . They obey! They obey! They are going to pass under the terrace. . . . They are going to pass under the rocks. I am going to see them near by. . . . Oh! oh! what a lot of them! . . . What a lot of them! The whole road is full of them! . . . They all keep still now. . . . Shepherd! shepherd! why don't they speak any more?

The Shepherd [*who is out of sight*]. Because it is no longer the road to the stable. . . .

Yniold. Where are they going?—Shepherd! shepherd!—Where are they going?—He doesn't hear me any more. They are too far away already. . . . They go quick. . . . They are not making a noise any more. . . . It is no longer the road to the stable. . . . Where are they going to sleep to-night?—Oh! oh!—It is too dark. . . . I am going to tell something to somebody. . . . [*Exit.*]

SCENE FOUR—*A fountain in the park.*

[*Enter* PELLÉAS.]

Pelléas. It is the last evening . . . the last evening. It must all end. I have played like a child about a thing I did not guess. . . . I have played a-dream about the snares of fate. . . . Who has awakened me all at once? I shall flee, crying out for joy and woe like a blind man fleeing from his burning house. . . . I am going to tell her I shall flee. . . . My father is out of danger; and I have no more reason to lie to myself. . . . It is late; she does not come. . . . I should do better to go away without seeing her again. . . . I must look well at her this time. . . . There are some things that I no longer recall. . . . It seems at times as if I had not seen her for a hundred years. . . . And I have not yet looked upon her look. . . . There remains nought to me if I go away thus. And all those memories . . . it is as if I were to take away a little water in a muslin bag. . . . I must see her one last time, to the bottom of her heart. . . . I must tell her all that I have never told her.

[*Enter* MÉLISANDE.]

Mélisande. Pelléas!

Pelléas. Mélisande!—Is it thou, Mélisande?

Mélisande. Yes.

Pelléas. Come hither; do not stay at the edge of the moonlight.—Come hither. We have so many things to tell each other. . . . Come hither in the shadow of the linden.

Mélisande. Let me stay in the light. . . .

Pelléas. We might be seen from the windows of the tower. Come hither; here, we have nothing to fear.—Take care; we might be seen . . .

Mélisande. I wish to be seen. . . .

Pelléas. Why, what doth ail thee?—Thou wert able to come out without being seen?

Mélisande. Yes; your brother slept. . . .

Pelléas. It is late.—In an hour they will close the gates. We must be careful. Why art thou come so late?

Mélisande. Your brother had a bad dream. And then my gown was caught on the nails of the gate. See, it is torn. I lost all this time, and ran. . . .

Pelléas. My poor Mélisande! . . . I should almost be afraid to touch thee. . . . Thou art still out of breath, like a hunted bird. . . . It is for me, for me, thou doest all that? . . . I hear thy heart beat as if it were mine. . . . Come hither . . . nearer, nearer me.

Mélisande. Why do you laugh?

Pelléas. I do not laugh;—or else I laugh for joy, unwittingly. . . . It were a weeping matter, rather. . . .

Mélisande. We have come here before. . . . I recollect. . . .

Pelléas. Yes . . . yes . . . Long months ago.—I knew not then. . . . Knowest thou why I asked thee to come here to-night?

Mélisande. No.

Pelléas. It is perhaps the last time I shall see thee. . . . I must go away forever. . . .

Mélisande. Why sayest thou always thou wilt go away? . . .

Pelléas. I must tell thee what thou knowest already?—Thou knowest not what I am going to tell thee?

Mélisande. Why, no; why, no; I know nothing— . . .

Pelléas. Thou knowest not why I must go afar. . . . Thou knowest not it is because . . . [*He kisses her abruptly.*] I love thee. . . .

Mélisande [*in a low voice*]. I love thee, too. . . .

Pelléas. Oh! oh! What saidst thou, Mélisande? . . . I hardly heard it! . . . Thou sayest that in a voice coming from the end of the world! . . . I hardly heard thee. . . . Thou lovest me?—Thou lovest me, too? . . . Since when lovest thou me? . . .

Mélisande. Since always. . . . Since I saw thee. . . .

Pelléas. Oh, how thou sayest that! . . . Thy voice seems to have blown across the sea in spring! . . . I have never heard it until now; . . . one would say it had rained on my heart! . . . Thou sayest that so frankly! . . . Like an angel questioned! . . . I cannot believe it, Mélisande! . . . Why shouldst thou love me?—Nay, why dost thou love me?—Is what thou sayest true?—Thou dost not mock me?—Thou dost not lie a little, to make me smile? . . .

Mélisande. No; I never lie; I lie but to thy brother. . . .

Pelléas. Oh, how thou sayest that! . . . Thy voice! thy voice! . . . It is cooler and more frank than the water is! . . . It is like pure water on my lips! . . . It is like pure water on my hands. . . . Give me, give me thy hands! . . . Oh, how small thy hands are! . . . I did not know thou wert so beautiful! . . . I have never seen anything so beautiful before thee. . . . I was full of unrest; I sought throughout the house. . . . I sought throughout the country. . . . And I found not beauty. . . . And now I have found thee! . . . I have found thee! . . . I do not think there could be on the earth a fairer woman! . . . Where art thou?—I no longer hear thee breathe. . . .

Mélisande. Because I look on thee. . . .

Pelléas. Why dost thou look so gravely on me?—We are already in the shadow.—It is too dark under this tree.—Come into the light. We cannot see how happy we are. Come, come; so little time remains to us. . . .

Mélisande. No, no; let us stay here. . . . I am nearer thee in the dark. . . .

Pelléas. Where are thine eyes?—Thou art not going to fly me?—Thou dost not think of me just now.

Mélisande. Oh, yes; oh, yes; I only think of thee. . . .

Pelléas. Thou wert looking elsewhere. . . .

Mélisande. I saw thee elsewhere . . .

Pelléas. Thy soul is far away. . . . What ails thee, then?—Meseems thou art not happy. . . .

Mélisande. Yes, yes; I am happy, but I am sad. . . .

Pelléas. One is sad often when one loves. . . .

Mélisande. I weep always when I think of thee. . . .

Pelléas. I, too. . . . I, too, Mélisande. . . . I am quite near thee; I weep for joy, and yet . . . [*He kisses her again.*]—Thou art strange when I kiss thee so. . . . Thou art so beautiful that one would think thou wert about to die. . . .

Mélisande. Thou, too. . . .

Pelléas. There, there. . . . We do not what we will. . . . I did not love thee the first time I saw thee. . .

Mélisande. Nor I . . . nor I. . . . I was afraid. . . .

Pelléas. I could not admit thine eyes. . . . I would have gone away at once . . . and then. . . .

Mélisande. And I—I would not have come. . . . I do not yet know why—I was afraid to come. . . .

Pelléas. There are so many things one never knows. We are ever waiting; and then. . . . What is that noise?—They are closing the gates! . . .

Mélisande. Yes, they have closed the gates. . . .

Pelléas. We cannot go back now!—Hearest thou the bolts?—Listen! Listen! . . . The great chains! . . . The great chains! . . . It is too late; it is too late! . . .

Mélisande. All the better! all the better! all the better! . . .

Pelléas. Thou— . . . ? Behold, behold! . . . It is no longer we who will it so! . . . All's lost, all's saved! All is saved to-night!—Come, come. . . . My heart beats like a madman,—up to my very throat. . . . [*They embrace.*] Listen! Listen! My heart is almost strangling me. . . . Come! come! . . . Ah, how beautiful it is in the shadows! . . .

Mélisande. There is some one behind us!

Pelléas. I see no one. . . .

Mélisande. I heard a noise. . . .

Pelléas. I hear only thy heart in the dark. . . .

Mélisande. I heard the crackling of dead leaves. . . .

Pelléas. Because the wind is silent all at once. . . . It fell as we were kissing. . . .

Mélisande. How long our shadows are to-night! . . .

Pelléas. They embrace to the very end of the garden. Oh, how they kiss far away from us! . . . Look! look! . . .

Mélisande [*in a stifled voice*]. A-a-h!—He is behind a tree!

Pelléas. Who?

Mélisande. Golaud!

Pelléas. Golaud!—Where?—I see nothing. . . .

Mélisande. There . . . at the end of our shadows. . . .

Pelléas. Yes, yes; I saw him. . . . Let us not turn abruptly. . . .

Mélisande. He has his sword. . . .

Pelléas. I have not mine. . . .

Mélisande. He saw us kiss. . . .

Pelléas. He does not know we have seen him. . . . Do not stir; do not turn your head. . . . He would rush headlong on us. . . . He will remain there while he thinks we do not know. He watches us. . . . He is still motionless. . . . Go, go at once this way. . . . I will wait for him. . . . I will stop him. . . .

Mélisande. No, no, no! . . .

Pelléas. Go! Go! He has seen all! . . . He will kill us! . . .

Mélisande. All the better! all the better! all the better! . . .

Pelléas. He comes! He comes! . . . Thy mouth! . . . Thy mouth! . . .

Mélisande. Yes! . . . yes! yes! . . .

[*They kiss desperately.*]

Pelléas. Oh! oh! All the stars are falling! . . .

Mélisande. Upon me, too! upon me, too!

Pelléas. Again! Again! . . . Give! Give!

Mélisande. All! all! all! . . .

[Golaud *rushes upon them, sword in hand, and strikes* Pelléas, *who falls at the brink of the fountain.* Mélisande *flees terrified.*]

Mélisande [*fleeing*]. Oh! oh! I have no courage! . . . I have no courage! . . .

[Golaud *pursues her through the wood in silence.*]

ACT FIVE

Scene One—*A lower hall in the castle. The women servants discovered, gathered together, while without children are playing before one of the ventilators of the hall.*

An Old Servant. You will see, you will see, my daughters; it will be to-night.—Some one will come to tell us by and by. . . .

Another Servant. They will not come to tell us. . . . They don't know what they are doing any longer. . . .

Third Servant. Let us wait here. . . .

Fourth Servant. We shall know well enough when we must go up. . . .

Fifth Servant. When the time is come, we shall go up of ourselves. . . .

Sixth Servant. There is no longer a sound heard in the house. . . .

Seventh Servant. We ought to make the children keep still, who are playing before the ventilator.

Eighth Servant. They will be still of themselves by and by.

Ninth Servant. The time has not yet come.

[*Enter an old Servant.*]

The Old Servant. No one can go in the room any longer. I have listened more than an hour. . . . You could hear the flies walk on the doors. . . . I heard nothing. . . .

First Servant. Has she been left alone in the room?

The Old Servant. No, no; I think the room is full of people.

First Servant. They will come, they will come, by and by. . . .

The Old Servant. Lord! Lord! It is not happiness that has come into the house. . . . One may not speak, but if I could say what I know. . . .

Second Servant. It was you who found them before the gate?

The Old Servant. Why, yes! why, yes! It was I who found them. The porter says it was he who saw them first; but it was I who waked them. He was sleepng on his face and would not get up.—And now he comes saying, "It was I who saw them first." Is that just?—See, I burned myself lighting a lamp to go down cellar.—Now what was I going to do down cellar?—I can't remember any more what I was going to do down cellar. —At any rate, I got up very early; it was not yet very light; I said to myself, I will go across the courtyard, and then I will open the gate. Good; I go down the stairs on tiptoe, and I open the gate as if it were an ordinary gate. . . . My God! My God! What do I see? Divine a little what I see! . . .

First Servant. They were before the gate?

The Old Servant. They were both stretched

out before the gate! . . . Exactly like poor folk that are too hungry. . . . They were huddled together like little children who are afraid. . . . The little princess was nearly dead, and the great Golaud had still his sword in his side. . . . There was blood on the sill. . . .

Second Servant. We ought to make the children keep still. . . . They are screaming with all their might before the ventilator. . . .

Third Servant. You can't hear yourself speak. . . .

Fourth Servant. There is nothing to be done: I have tried already; they won't keep still. . . .

First Servant. It seems he is nearly cured?

The Old Servant. Who?

First Servant. The great Golaud.

Third Servant. Yes, yes; they have taken him to his wife's room. I met them just now, in the corridor. They were holding him up as if he were drunk. He cannot yet walk alone.

The Old Servant. He could not kill himself; he is too big. But she is hardly wounded, and it is she who is going to die. . . . Can you understand that?

First Servant. You have seen the wound?

The Old Servant. As I see you, my daughter.—I saw everything, you understand. . . . I saw it before all the others. . . . A tiny little wound under her little left breast,—a little wound that wouldn't kill a pigeon. Is it natural?

First Servant. Yes, yes; there is something underneath. . . .

Second Servant. Yes; but she was delivered of her babe three days ago. . . .

The Old Servant. Exactly! . . . She was delivered on her death-bed; is that a little sign?—And what a child! Have you seen it? A wee little girl a beggar would not bring into the world. . . . A little wax figure that came much too soon; . . . a little wax figure that must live in lambs' wool . . . Yes, yes; it is not happiness that has come into the house. . . .

First Servant. Yes, yes; it is the hand of God that has been stirring. . . .

Second Servant. Yes, yes; all that did not happen without reason. . . .

Third Servant. It is as good Lord Pélléas . . . where is he?—No one knows. . . .

The Old Servant. Yes, yes; everybody knows. . . . But nobody dare speak of it. . . . One does not speak of this; . . . one does not speak of that; . . . one speaks no more of anything; . . . one no longer speaks truth. . . . But *I* know he was found at the bottom of Blind Man's Spring; . . . but no one, no one could see him. . . . Well, well, we shall only know all that at the last day. . . .

First Servant. I dare not sleep here any longer. . . .

The Old Servant. Yes, yes; once ill-fortune is in the house, one keeps silence in vain. . . .

Third Servant. Yes; it finds you all the same. . . .

The Old Servant. Yes, yes; but we do not go where we would. . . .

Fourth Servant. Yes, yes; we do not do what we would. . . .

First Servant. They are afraid of us now.

Second Servant. They all keep silence. . . .

Third Servant. They cast down their eyes in the corridors.

Fourth Servant. They do not speak any more except in a low voice.

Fifth Servant. You would think they had all done it together.

Sixth Servant. One doesn't know what they have done. . . .

Seventh Servant. What is to be done when the masters are afraid? . . . [*A silence.*]

First Servant. I no longer hear the children screaming.

Second Servant. They are sitting down before the ventilator.

Third Servant. They are huddled against each other.

The Old Servant. I no longer hear anything in the house. . . .

First Servant. You no longer even hear the children breathe. . . .

The Old Servant. Come, come; it is time to go up. . . . [*Exeunt, in silence.*]

SCENE TWO—*An apartment in the castle.* ARKËL, GOLAUD, *and the* PHYSICIAN *discovered in one corner of the room.* MÉLISANDE *is stretched upon her bed.*

The Physician. It cannot be of that little wound she is dying; a bird would not have died of it. . . . It is not you, then, who have killed her, good my lord; do not be so disconsolate. . . . She could not have lived. . . . She was born without reason . . . to die; and she dies without reason. . . . And then, it is not sure we shall not save her. . . .

Arkël. No, no; it seems to me we keep too

silent, in spite of ourselves, in her room. . . . It is not a good sign. . . . Look how she sleeps . . . slowly, slowly; . . . it is as if her soul was cold forever. . . .

Golaud. I have killed her without cause! I have killed her without cause! . . . Is it not enough to make the stones weep? . . . They had kissed like little children. . . . They had simply kissed. . . . They were brother and sister. . . . And I, and I at once! . . . I did it in spite of myself, look you. . . . I did it in spite of myself. . . .

The Physician. Stop; I think she is waking. . . .

Mélisande. Open the window; . . . open the window. . . .

Arkël. Shall I open this one, Mélisande?

Mélisande. No, no; the great window . . . the great window. . . . It is to see . . .

Arkël. Is not the sea air too cold to-night?

The Physician. Do it; do it. . . .

Mélisande. Thanks. . . . Is it sunset?

Arkël. Yes; it is sunset on the sea; it is late.—How are you, Mélisande?

Mélisande. Well, well.—Why do you ask that? I have never been better.—And yet it seems to me I know something. . . .

Arkël. What sayest thou?—I do not understand thee. . . .

Mélisande. Neither do I understand all I say, you see. . . . I do not know what I am saying. . . . I do not know what I know. . . . I no longer say what I would. . . .

Arkël. Why, yes! why, yes! . . . I am quite happy to hear thee speak so; thou hast raved a little these last days, and one no longer understood thee. . . . But now all that is far away. . . .

Mélisande. I do not know. . . .—Are you all alone in the room, grandfather?

Arkël. No; there is the physician, besides, who cured thee. . . .

Mélisande. Ah! . . .

Arkël. And then there is still some one else. . . .

Mélisande. Who is it?

Arkël. It is . . . thou must not be frightened. . . . He does not wish thee the least harm, be sure. . . . If thou'rt afraid, he will go away. . . . He is very unhappy. . . .

Mélisande. Who is it?

Arkël. It is thy . . . thy husband. . . . It is Golaud. . . .

Mélisande. Golaud is here? Why does he not come by me?

Golaud [*dragging himself toward the bed*]. Mélisande . . . Mélisande. . . .

Mélisande. Is it you, Golaud? I should hardly recognize you any more. . . . It is the evening sunlight in my eyes. . . . Why look you on the walls? You have grown thin and old. . . . Is it a long while since we saw each other?

Golaud. [*To* ARKËL *and the* PHYSICIAN.] Will you withdraw a moment, if you please, if you please? . . . I will leave the door wide open. . . . One moment only. . . . I would say something to her; else I could not die. . . . Will you?—Go clear to the end of the corridor; you can come back at once, at once. . . . Do not refuse me this. . . . I am a wretch. . . . [*Exit* ARKËL *and the* PHYSICIAN.]—Mélisande, hast thou pity on me, as I have pity on thee? . . . Mélisande? . . . Dost thou forgive me, Mélisande? . . .

Mélisande. Yes, yes, I do forgive thee. . . . What must I forgive? . . .

Golaud. I have wrought thee so much ill, Mélisande. . . . I cannot tell thee the ill I have wrought thee. . . . But I see it, I see it so clearly to-day . . . since the first day. . . . And all I did not know till now leaps in my eyes to-night. . . . And it is all my fault, all that has happened, all that will happen. . . . If I could tell it, thou wouldst see as I do! . . . I see all! I see all! . . . But I loved thee so! . . . I loved thee so! . . . But now there is some one dying. . . . It is I who am dying. . . . And I would know . . . I would ask thee. . . . Thou'lt bear me no ill-will . . . I would . . . The truth must be told to a dying man. . . . He must know the truth, or else he could not sleep. . . . Swearest thou to tell me the truth?

Mélisande. Yes.

Golaud. Didst thou love Pélléas?

Mélisande. Why, yes; I loved him.—Where is he?

Golaud. Thou dost not understand me?—Thou wilt not understand me?—It seems to me . . . it seems to me . . . Well, then, here: I ask thee if thou lovest him with a forbidden love? . . . Wert thou . . . were you guilty? Say, say, yes, yes, yes! . . .

Mélisande. No, no; we were not guilty.—Why do you ask that?

Golaud. Mélisande! . . . tell me the truth, for the love of God!

Mélisande. Why have I not told the truth?

Golaud. Do not lie so any more, at the moment of death!

Mélisande. Who is dying?—Is it I?

Golaud. Thou, thou! And I, I too, after thee! . . . And we must have the truth. . . . We must have the truth at last, dost thou understand? . . . Tell me all! Tell me all! I forgive thee all! . . .

Mélisande. Why am I going to die?—I did not know it. . . .

Golaud. Thou knowest it now! . . . It is time! It is time! . . . Quick! quick! . . . The truth! the truth! . . .

Mélisande. The truth . . . the truth . . .

Golaud. Where art thou?—Mélisande!—Where art thou?—It is not natural! Mélisande. Where art thou!—Where goest thou? [*Perceiving* Arkël *and the* Physician *at the door of the room.*]—Yes, yes; you may come in. . . . I know nothing; it is useless. . . . It is too late; she is already too far away from us. . . . I shall never know! . . . I shall die here like a blind man! . . .

Arkël. What have you done? You will kill her. . . .

Golaud. I have already killed her. . . .

Arkël. Mélisande. . . .

Mélisande. Is it you, grandfather?

Arkël. Yes, my daughter. . . . What would you have me do?

Mélisande. Is it true that the winter is beginning? . . .

Arkël. Why dost thou ask?

Mélisande. Because it is cold, and there are no more leaves. . . .

Arkël. Thou art cold?—Wilt thou have the windows closed?

Mélisande. No, no, . . . not till the sun be at the bottom of the sea.—It sinks slowly; then it is the winter beginning?

Arkël. Yes.—Thou dost not like the winter?

Mélisande. Oh! no. I am afraid of the cold.—I am so afraid of the great cold. . . .

Arkël. Dost thou feel better?

Mélisande. Yes, yes; I have no longer all those qualms. . . .

Arkël. Wouldst thou see thy child?

Mélisande. What child?

Arkël. Thy child.—Thou art a mother. . . . Thou hast brought a little daughter into the world. . . .

Mélisande. Where is she?

Arkël. Here. . . .

Mélisande. It is strange. I cannot lift my arms to take her. . . .

Arkël. Because you are still very weak. . . . I will hold her myself; look. . . .

Mélisande. She does not laugh. . . . She is little. . . . She is going to weep too. . . . I pity her. . . .

[*The room has been invaded, little by little, by the women servants of the castle, who range themselves in silence along the walls and wait.*]

Golaud [*rising abruptly*]. What is the matter?—What are all these women coming here for? . . .

The Physician. It is the servants. . . .

Arkël. Who was it called them?

The Physician. It was not I. . . .

Golaud. Why do you come here?—No one has asked for you. . . . What come you here to do?—But what is it, then?—Answer me!

[*The servants make no answer.*]

Arkël. Do not speak too loud. . . . She is going to sleep; she has closed her eyes. . . .

Golaud. It is not . . . ?

The Physician. No, no; see, she breathes.

Arkël. Her eyes are full of tears.—It is her soul weeping now. . . . Why does she stretch her arms out so?—What would she?

The Physician. It is toward the child, without doubt. . . . It is the struggle of motherhood against . . .

Golaud. At this moment?—At this moment?—You must say. Say! Say! . . .

The Physician. Perhaps.

Golaud. At once? . . . Oh! oh! I must tell her. . . . —Mélisande! . . . Mélisande! . . . Leave me alone! leave me alone with her! . . .

Arkël. No, no; do not come near. . . . Trouble her not. . . . Speak no more to her. . . . You know not what the soul is. . . .

Golaud. It is not my fault! . . . It is not my fault!

Arkël. Hush! . . . Hush! . . . We must speak softly now.—She must not be disturbed. . . . The human soul is very silent. . . . The human soul likes to depart alone. . . . It suffers so timorously. . . . But the sadness, Golaud . . . the sadness of all we see! . . . Oh! oh! oh! . . .

[*At this moment, all the servants fall suddenly on their knees at the back of the chamber.*]

Arkël [*turning*]. What is the matter!

The Physician [*approaching the bed and feeling the body*]. They are right. . . .

[*A long silence.*]

Arkël. I saw nothing.—Are you sure?

The Physician. Yes, yes.

Arkël. I heard nothing. . . . So quick, so quick! . . . All at once! . . . She goes without a word. . . .

Golaud [*sobbing*]. Oh! oh! oh!

Arkël. Do not stay here, Golaud. . . . She must have silence now. . . . Come, come. . . . It is terrible, but it is not your fault. . . . 'Twas a little being, so quiet, so fearful, and so silent. . . . 'Twas a poor little mysterious being, like everybody. . . . She lies there as if she were the big sister of her child. . . . Come, come. . . . My God! My God! . . . I shall never understand it at all. . . . Let us not stay here.—Come; the child must not stay here in this room. . . . She must live now in her place. . . . It is the poor little one's turn. . . . [*They go out in silence.*]

THE END

LILIOM

By FERENC MOLNAR

Translated from the Hungarian by BENJAMIN F. GLAZER

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FERENC MOLNAR AND HIS PLAYS

Ferenc Molnar, the most celebrated writer of contemporary Hungary, and the author of *Liliom,* was born in Budapest in 1879. While still in his teens he became a journalist and quickly gained fame through his clever stories and sketches. His reputation in Hungary is based upon his stories and novels as well as his plays, but he is chiefly known to the outside world as a dramatist. He has written over twenty plays of different types, many of which have been produced with success in America. Among these are not only *Liliom* but *The Devil, The Swan, The Guardsman,* and *The Play's the Thing.*

Molnar's range is remarkable, not only in subject-matter but in method and in tone. His lighter plays resemble those of Schnitzler—farce-comedies such as *The Play's the Thing* and *The Guardsman,* and comedies of manners, such as *The Swan*—plays of light and clever satire and often of brilliant dialogue. Again, like Schnitzler, he often sounds a deeper note, one of real pathos and sincere sentiment, as in *Liliom;* for Molnar is not only a satirist but a poet. His dramaturgy is strikingly original and often daring; for he has no more regard for the conventions of playmaking than he has for those of organized society. An American is likely to regard him as typically mid-European in his entire attitude toward life and in his scheme of values—and to feel refreshed and delighted or depressed and shocked, according to temperament.

Of all Molnar's plays *Liliom* ("The Lily") has made the widest appeal to the public and thus far is assuredly his masterpiece. Much discussed, often regarded as puzzling, it is really perfectly simple in essence; for it is essentially a love story, illustrating two very diverse characters, is intended only as such, and presents no subtle teaching and no special philosophy. Certainly, contrary to what seems the general opinion, it essays no theory of the after-life. Its amusing excursus into the supernatural is a purely fanciful touch that justifies itself simply by its own charm, whether or not it be essential to the play. Human character and passion, love and hate and crime, faithfulness and the sweetness of memory—these are surely sufficiently substantial and earthly and universal elements, when treated with originality and distinction, to give beauty and significance to any play—and these elements *Liliom* possesses in abundance.

Liliom was written in 1909 and was produced first in December of that year in Budapest. Its first production in English was in London in September, 1920, under the title of *The Daisy,* where it was again produced in December, 1926, as *Liliom.* In the meantime, its first production in America had taken place in April, 1920, in New York by The Theatre Guild. In June, 1923, it was produced in Paris. Its success wherever produced was immediate, and through repeated productions in various countries it has become one of the best known of contemporary plays.

CHARACTERS

Liliom
Julie
Marie
Mrs. Muskat
Louise
Mrs. Hollunder
Ficsur
Young Hollunder
Wolf Beifeld
The Carpenter
Linzman
The Doctor
The Magistrate
Two Mounted Policemen
Two Plainclothes Policemen
Two Heavenly Policemen
The Richly Dressed Man
The Poorly Dressed Man
The Guard
A Suburban Policeman

The action takes place in Budapest at the present day

LILIOM

THE PROLOGUE

An amusement park on the outskirts of Budapest on a late afternoon in Spring. Barkers stand before the booths of the sideshows haranguing the passing crowd. The strident music of a calliope is heard; laughter, shouts, the scuffle of feet, the signal bells of a merry-go-round.

The merry-go-round is at Center. LILIOM *stands at the entrance, a cigarette in his mouth, coaxing the people in. The girls regard him with idolizing glances and screech with pleasure as he playfully pushes them through entrance. Now and then some girl's escort resents the familiarity, whereupon* LILIOM'S *demeanor becomes ugly and menacing, and the cowed escort slinks through the entrance behind his girl or contents himself with a muttered resentful comment.*

One girl hands LILIOM *a red carnation; he rewards her with a bow and a smile. When the soldier who accompanies her protests,* LILIOM *cows him with a fierce glance and a threatening gesture.* MARIE *and* JULIE *come out of the crowd, and* LILIOM *favors them with particular notice as they pass into the merry-go-round.*

MRS. MUSKAT *comes out of the merry-go-round, bringing* LILIOM *coffee and rolls.* LILIOM *mounts the barker's stand at the entrance, where he is elevated over everyone on the stage. Here he begins his harangue. Everybody turns toward him. The other booths are gradually deserted. The tumult makes it impossible for the audience to hear what he is saying, but every now and then some witticism of his provokes a storm of laughter which is audible above the din. Many people enter the merry-go-round. Here and there one catches a phrase "Room for one more on the zebra's back," "Which of you ladies?", "Ten heller for adults, five for children," "Step right up."*

It is growing darker. A lamplighter crosses the stage, and begins unperturbedly lighting the colored gas-lamps. The whistle of a distant locomotive is heard. Suddenly the tumult ceases, the lights go out, and the curtain falls in darkness.

SCENE ONE

SCENE—*A lonely place in the park, half hidden by trees and shrubbery. Under a flowering acacia tree stands a painted wooden bench. From the distance, faintly, comes the tumult of the amusement park. It is the sunset of the same day.*

When the curtain rises the stage is empty. MARIE *enters quickly, pauses at center, and looks back.*

Marie. Julie, Julie! [*There is no answer.*] Do you hear me, Julie? Let her be! Come on. Let her be. [*Starts to go back.*] [JULIE *enters, looks back angrily.*]

Julie. Did you ever hear of such a thing? What's the matter with the woman anyway?

Marie. [*Looking back again.*] Here she comes again.

Julie. Let her come. I didn't do anything to her. All of a sudden she comes up to me and begins to raise a row.

Marie. Here she is. Come on, let's run. [*Tries to urge her off.*]

Julie. Run? I should say not. What would I want to run for? I'm not afraid of her.

Marie. Oh, come on. She'll only start a fight.

Julie. I'm going to stay right here. Let her *start* a fight.

Mrs. Muskat. [*Entering.*] What do you want to run away for? [*To* JULIE.] Don't worry. I won't eat you. But there's one thing I want to tell you, my dear. Don't let me catch you in my carousel again. I stand for a whole lot, I have to in my business. It makes no difference to me whether my customers are ladies or the likes of you—as long as they pay their money. But when a girl misbehaves herself on my carousel—out she goes. Do you understand?

Julie. Are you talking to me?

Mrs. Muskat. Yes, you! You—chambermaid, you! In my carousel——

Julie. Who did anything in your old carousel? I paid my fare and took my seat and never said a word, except to my friend here.

Marie. No, she never opened her mouth. Liliom came over to her of his own accord.

Mrs. Muskat. It's all the same. I'm not going to get in trouble with the police, and lose my license on account of you—you shabby kitchen maid!

Julie. Shabby yourself.

Mrs. Muskat. You stay out of my carousel! Letting my barker fool with you! Aren't you ashamed of yourself?

Julie. What? What did you say?

Mrs. Muskat. I suppose you think I have no eyes in my head. I see everything that goes on in my carousel. During the whole ride she let Liliom fool with her—the shameless hussy!

Julie. He did not fool with me! I don't let any man fool with me!

Mrs. Muskat. He leaned against you all through the ride!

Julie. He leaned against the panther. He always leans against something, doesn't he? Everybody leans where he wants. I couldn't tell him not to lean, if he always leans, could I? But he didn't lay a hand on me.

Mrs. Muskat. Oh, didn't he? And I suppose he didn't put his hand around your waist, either?

Marie. And if he did? What of it?

Mrs. Muskat. You hold your tongue! No one's asking you—just you keep out of it.

Julie. He put his arm around my waist—just the same as he does to all the girls. He always does that.

Mrs. Muskat. I'll teach him not to do it any more, my dear. No carryings on in my carousel! If you are looking for that sort of thing, you'd better go to the circus! You'll find lots of soldiers there to carry on with!

Julie. You keep your soldiers for yourself!

Marie. Soldiers! As if we wanted soldiers!

Mrs. Muskat. Well, I only want to tell you this, my dear, so that we understand each other perfectly. If you ever stick your nose in my carousel again, you'll wish you hadn't! I'm not going to lose my license on account of the likes of you! People who don't know how to behave, have got to stay out!

Julie. You're wasting your breath. If I feel like riding on your carousel I'll pay my ten heller and I'll ride. I'd like to see anyone try to stop me!

Mrs. Muskat. Just come and try it, my dear—just come and try it.

Marie. We'll see what'll happen.

Mrs. Muskat. Yes, you will see something happen that never happened before in this park.

Julie. Perhaps you think you could throw me out!

Mrs. Muskat. I'm sure of it, my dear.

Julie. And suppose I'm stronger than you?

Mrs. Muskat. I'd think twice before I'd dirty my hands on a common servant girl. I'll have Liliom throw you out. He knows how to handle your kind.

Julie. You think Liliom would throw me out.

Mrs. Muskat. Yes, my dear, so fast that you won't know what happened to you!

Julie. He'd throw me—— [*Stops suddenly, for* Mrs. Muskat *has turned away. Both look off stage until* Liliom *enters, surrounded by four giggling servant girls.*]

Liliom. Go away! Stop following me, or I'll smack your face!

A Little Servant Girl. Well, give me back my handkerchief.

Liliom. Go on now——

The Four Servant Girls. [*Simultaneously.*] What do you think of him?—My handkerchief!—Give it back to her!—That's a nice thing to do!

The Little Servant Girl. [*To* Mrs. Muskat.] Please, lady, make him——

Mrs. Muskat. Oh, shut up!

Liliom. Will you get out of here? [*Makes a threatening gesture—the four servant girls exit in voluble but fearful haste.*]

Mrs. Muskat. What have you been doing now?

Liliom. None of your business. [*Glances at* Julie.] Have you been starting with her again?

Julie. Mister Liliom, please——

Liliom. [*Steps threateningly toward her.*] Don't yell!

Julie. [*Timidly.*] I didn't yell.

Liliom. Well, don't. [*To* Mrs. Muskat.]

What's the matter? What has she done to you?

Mrs. Muskat. What has she done? She's been impudent to me. Just as impudent as she could be! I put her out of the carousel. Take a good look at this innocent thing, Liliom. She's never to be allowed in my carousel again!

Liliom. [*To* JULIE.] You heard that. Run home, now.

Marie. Come on. Don't waste your time with such people. [*Tries to lead* JULIE *away.*]

Julie. No, I won't——

Mrs. Muskat. If she ever comes again, you're not to let her in. And if she gets in before you see her, throw her out. Understand?

Liliom. What has she done, anyhow?

Julie. [*Agitated and very earnest.*] Mister Liliom—tell me please—honest and truly—if I come into the carousel, will you throw me out?

Mrs. Muskat. Of course he'll throw you out.

Marie. She wasn't talking to you.

Julie. Tell me straight to my face, Mister Liliom, would you throw me out? [*They face each other. There is a brief pause.*]

Liliom. Yes, little girl, if there was a reason—but if there was no reason, why should I throw you out?

Marie. [*To* MRS. MUSKAT.] There, you see!

Julie. Thank you, Mister Liliom.

Mrs. Muskat. And I tell you again, if this little slut dares to set her foot in my carousel, she's to be thrown out! I'll stand for no indecency in my establishment.

Liliom. What do you mean—indecency?

Mrs. Muskat. I saw it all. There's no use denying it.

Julie. She says you put your arm around my waist.

Liliom. Me?

Mrs. Muskat. Yes, you! I saw you. Don't play the innocent.

Liliom. Here's something new! I'm not to put my arm around a girl's waist any more! I suppose I'm to ask your permission before I touch another girl!

Mrs. Muskat. You can touch as many girls as you want and as often as you want—for my part you can go as far as you like with any of them—but not this one—I permit no indecency in my carousel. [*There is a long pause.*]

Liliom. [*To* MRS. MUSKAT.] And now I'll ask you please to shut your mouth.

Mrs. Muskat. What?

Liliom. Shut your mouth quick, and go back to your carousel.

Mrs. Muskat. What?

Liliom. What did she do to you, anyhow? Tryin' to start a fight with a little pigeon like that . . . just because I touched her? —You come to the carousel as often as you want to, little girl. Come every afternoon, and sit on the panther's back, and if you haven't got the price, Liliom will pay for you. And if anyone dares to bother you, you come and tell *me.*

Mrs. Muskat. You reprobate!

Liliom. Old witch!

Julie. Thank you, Mister Liliom.

Mrs. Muskat. You seem to think that I can't throw you out, too. What's the reason I can't? Because you are the best barker in the park? Well, you are very much mistaken. In fact, you can consider yourself thrown out already. You're discharged!

Liliom. Very good.

Mrs. Muskat. [*Weakening a little.*] I can discharge you any time I feel like it.

Liliom. Very good, you feel like discharging me. I'm discharged. That settles it.

Mrs. Muskat. Playing the high and mighty, are you? Conceited pig! Good-for-nothing!

Liliom. You said you'd throw me out, didn't you? Well, that suits me; I'm thrown out.

Mrs. Muskat. [*Softening.*] Do you have to take up every word I say?

Liliom. It's all right; it's all settled. I'm a good-for-nothing. And a conceited pig. And I'm discharged.

Mrs. Muskat. Do you want to ruin my business?

Liliom. A good-for-nothing? Now I know! And I'm discharged! Very good.

Mrs. Muskat. You're a devil, you are . . and that woman——

Liliom. Keep away from her!

Mrs. Muskat. I'll get Hollinger to give you such a beating that you'll hear all the angels sing . . . and it won't be the first time, either.

Liliom. Get out of here. I'm discharged. And you get out of here.

Julie. [*Timidly.*] Mister Liliom, if she's willing to say that she hasn't discharged you——

Liliom. You keep out of this.

Julie. [*Timidly.*] I don't want this to happen on account of me.

Liliom. [*To* MRS. MUSKAT, *pointing to* JULIE.] Apologize to her!

Marie. A-ha!

Mrs. Muskat. Apologize? To whom?

Liliom. To this little pigeon. Well—are you going to do it?

Mrs. Muskat. If you give me this whole park on a silver plate, and all the gold of the Rothschilds on top of it—I'd—I'd—— Let her dare to come into my carousel again and she'll get thrown out so hard that she'll see stars in daylight!

Liliom. In that case, dear lady [*takes off his cap with a flourish*], you are respectfully requested to get out o' here as fast as your legs will carry you—I never beat up a woman yet—except that Holzer woman who I sent to the hospital for three weeks—but—if you don't get out o' here this minute, and let this little squab be, I'll give you the prettiest slap in the jaw you ever had in your life.

Mrs. Muskat. Very good, my son. Now you *can* go to the devil. Good-bye. You're discharged, and you needn't try to come back, either. [*She exits. It is beginning to grow dark.*]

Marie. [*With grave concern.*] Mister Liliom——

Liliom. Don't you pity me or I'll give *you* a slap in the jaw. [*To* JULIE.] And don't you pity me, either.

Julie. [*In alarm.*] I don't pity you, Mister Liliom.

Liliom. You're a liar, you *are* pitying me. I can see it in your face. You're thinking, now that Madame Muskat has thrown him out, Liliom will have to go begging. Huh! Look at me. I'm big enough to get along without a Madame Muskat. I have been thrown out of better jobs than hers.

Julie. What will you do now, Mister Liliom?

Liliom. Now? First of all, I'll go and get myself—a glass of beer. You see, when something happens to annoy me, I always drink a glass of beer.

Julie. Then you *are* annoyed about losing your job.

Liliom. No, only about where I'm going to get the beer.

Marie. Well—eh——

Liliom. Well—eh—what?

Marie. Well—eh—are you going to stay with us, Mister Liliom?

Liliom. Will you pay for the beer? [MARIE *looks doubtful; he turns to* JULIE.] Will you? [*She does not answer.*] How much money have you got?

Julie. [*Bashfully.*] Eight heller.

Liliom. And you? [MARIE *casts down her eyes and does not reply.* LILIOM *continues sternly.*] I asked you how much you've got? [MARIE *begins to weep softly.*] I understand. Well, you needn't cry about it. You girls stay here, while I go back to the carousel and get my clothes and things. And when I come back, we'll go to the Hungarian beer-garden. It's all right, I'll pay. Keep your money. [*He exits.* MARIE *and* JULIE *stand silent, watching him until he has gone.*]

Marie. Are you sorry for him?

Julie. Are you?

Marie. Yes, a little. Why are you looking after him in that funny way?

Julie. [*Sits down.*] Nothing—except I'm sorry he lost his job.

Marie. [*With a touch of pride.*] It was on our account he lost his job. Because he's fallen in love with you.

Julie. He hasn't at all.

Marie. [*Confidently.*] Oh, yes! he is in love with you. [*Hesitantly, romantically.*] There is someone in love with me, too.

Julie. There is? Who?

Marie. I—I never mentioned it before, because you hadn't a lover of your own—but now you have—and I'm free to speak. [*Very grandiloquently.*] My heart has found its mate.

Julie. You're only making it up.

Marie. No, it's true—my heart's true love——

Julie. Who? Who is he?

Marie. A soldier.

Julie. What kind of a soldier?

Marie. I don't know. Just a soldier. Are there different kinds?

Julie. Many different kinds. There are hussars, artillerymen, engineers, infantry—that's the kind that walks—and——

Marie. How can you tell which is which?

Julie. By their uniforms.

Marie. [*After trying to puzzle it out.*] The conductors on the street cars—are they soldiers?

Julie. Certainly not. They're conductors.

Marie. Well, they have uniforms.

Julie. But they don't carry swords or guns.

Marie. Oh! [*Thinks it over again; then.*] Well, policemen—are they?

Julie. [*With a touch of exasperation.*] Are they what?

Marie. Soldiers.

Julie. Certainly not. They're just policemen.

Marie. [*Triumphantly.*] But they have uniforms—and they carry weapons, too.

Julie. You're just as dumb as you can be. You don't go by their uniforms.

Marie. But you said——

Julie. No, I didn't. A letter-carrier wears a uniform, too, but that doesn't make him a soldier.

Marie. But if he carried a gun or a sword, would he be——

Julie. No, he'd still be a letter-carrier. You can't go by guns or swords, either.

Marie. Well, if you don't go by uniforms or the weapons, what *do* you go by?

Julie. By—— [*Tries to put it into words; fails; then breaks off suddenly.*] Oh, you'll get to know when you've lived in the city long enough. You're nothing but a country girl. When you've lived in the city a year, like I have, you'll know all about it.

Marie. [*Half angrily.*] Well, how *do* you know when *you* see a real soldier?

Julie. By one thing.

Marie. What?

Julie. One thing—— [*She pauses.* MARIE *starts to cry.*] Oh, what are you crying about?

Marie. Because you're making fun of me. . . . You're a city girl, and I'm just fresh from the country . . . and how am I expected to know a soldier when I see one? . . . You, you ought to tell me, instead of making fun of me——

Julie. All right. Listen then, cry-baby. There's only one way to tell a soldier: by his salute! That's the only way.

Marie. [*Joyfully; with a sigh of relief.*] Ah—that's good.

Julie. What?

Marie. I say—it's all right then—because Wolf—Wolf—— [JULIE *laughs derisively.*] Wolf—that's his name. [*She weeps again.*]

Julie. Crying again? What now?

Marie. You're making fun of me again.

Julie. I'm not. But when you say, "Wolf—Wolf—" like that, I have to laugh, don't I? [*Archly.*] What's his name again?

Marie. I won't tell you.

Julie. All right. If you won't say it, then he's no soldier.

Marie. I'll say it.

Julie. Go on.

Marie. No, I won't. [*She weeps again.*]

Julie. Then he's not a soldier. I guess he's a letter-carrier——

Marie. No—no—I'd rather say it.

Julie. Well, then.

Marie. [*Giggling.*] But you mustn't look at me. You look the other way, and I'll say it. [JULIE *looks away.* MARIE *can hardly restrain her own laughter.*] Wolf! [*She laughs.*] That's his real name. Wolf, Wolf, Soldier—Wolf!

Julie. What kind of a uniform does he wear?

Marie. Red.

Julie. Red trousers?

Marie. No.

Julie. Red coat?

Marie. No.

Julie. What then?

Marie. [*Triumphantly.*] His cap!

Julie. [*After a long pause.*] He's just a porter, you dunce. Red cap . . . that's a porter—and he doesn't carry a gun or a sword, either.

Marie. [*Triumphantly.*] But he salutes. You said yourself that was the only way to tell a soldier——

Julie. He doesn't salute at all. He only greets people——

Marie. He salutes me. . . . And if his name *is* Wolf, that doesn't prove he ain't a soldier—he salutes, and he wears a red cap and he stands on guard all day long outside a big building——

Julie. What does he do there?

Marie. [*Seriously.*] He spits.

Julie. [*With contempt.*] He's nothing—nothing but a common porter.

Marie. What's Liliom?

Julie. [*Indignantly.*] Why speak of him? What has he to do with me?

Marie. The same as Wolf has to do with me. If you can talk to me like that about Wolf, I can talk to you about Liliom.

Julie. He's nothing to me. He put his arm around me in the carousel. I couldn't tell him not to put his arm around me after he had done it, could I?

Marie. I suppose you didn't like him to do it?

Julie. No.

Marie. Then why are you waiting for him? Why don't you go home?

Julie. Why—eh—he *said* we were to wait for him.

[LILIOM *enters. There is a long silence.*]

Liliom. Are you still here? What are you waiting for?

Marie. You told us to wait.

Liliom. Must you always interfere? No one is talking to you.

Marie. You asked us—why we——

Liliom. Will you keep your mouth shut? What do you suppose I want with two of you? I meant that one of you was to wait. The other can go home.

Marie. All right.

Julie. All right. [*Neither starts to go.*]

Liliom. One of you goes home. [*To* MARIE.] Where do you work?

Marie. At the Breier's, Damjanovitsch Street, Number 20.

Liliom. And you?

Julie. I work there, too.

Liliom. Well, one of you goes home. Which of you wants to stay? [*There is no answer.*] Come on, speak up, which of you stays?

Marie. [*Officiously.*] She'll lose her job if she stays.

Liliom. Who will?

Marie. Julie. She has to be back by seven o'clock.

Liliom. Is that true? Will they discharge you if you're not back on time?

Julie. Yes.

Liliom. Well, wasn't I discharged?

Julie. Yes—you were discharged, too.

Marie. Julie, shall I go?

Julie. I—can't tell you what to do.

Marie. All right—stay if you like.

Liliom. You'll be discharged if you do?

Marie. Shall I go, Julie?

Julie. [*Embarrassed.*] Why do you keep asking me that?

Marie. You know best what to do.

Julie. [*Profoundly moved; slowly.*] It's all right, Marie, you can go home.

Marie. [*Exits reluctantly, but comes back, and says uncertainly.*] Good-night.

[*She waits a moment to see if* JULIE *will follow her.* JULIE *does not move.* MARIE *exits. Meantime it has grown quite dark. During the following scene the gas-lamps far in the distance are lighted one by one.* LILIOM *and* JULIE *sit on the bench. From afar, very faintly, comes the music of a calliope. But the music is intermittently heard; now it breaks off, now it resumes again, as if it came down on a fitful wind. Blending with it are the sounds of human voices, now loud, now soft; the blare of a toy trumpet; the confused noises of the show-booths. It grows progressively darker until the end of the scene. There is no moonlight. The spring iridescence glows in the deep blue sky.*]

Liliom. Now we're both discharged. [*She does not answer. From now on they speak gradually lower and lower until the end of the scene, which is played almost in whispers. Whistles softly, then.*] Have you had your supper?

Julie. No.

Liliom. Want to go eat something at the Garden?

Julie. No.

Liliom. Anywhere else?

Julie. No.

Liliom. [*Whistles softly, then.*] You don't come to this park very often, do you? I've only seen you three times. Been here oftener than that?

Julie. Oh, yes.

Liliom. Did you see me?

Julie. Yes.

Liliom. And did you know I was Liliom?

Julie. They told me.

Liliom. [*Whistles softly, then.*] Have you got a sweetheart?

Julie. No.

Liliom. Don't lie to me.

Julie. I haven't. If I had, I'd tell you. I've never had one.

Liliom. What an awful liar you are. I've got a good mind to go away and leave you here.

Julie. I've never had one.

Liliom. Tell that to someone else.

Julie. [*Reproachfully.*] Why do you insist I have?

Liliom. Because you stayed here with me the first time I asked you to. You know your way around, you do.

Julie. No, I don't, Mister Liliom.

Liliom. I suppose you'll tell me you don't know why you're sitting here—like this, in the dark, alone with me—You wouldn't 'a' stayed so quick, if you hadn't done it before—with some soldier, maybe. This isn't the first time. You wouldn't have been so ready to stay if it was—what *did* you stay for, anyhow?

Julie. So you wouldn't be left alone.

Liliom. Alone! God, you're dumb! I don't need to be alone. I can have all the girls I want. Not only servant girls like you, but cooks and governesses, even French girls. I could have twenty of them if I wanted to.

Julie. I know, Mister Liliom.

Liliom. What do you know?

Julie. That all the girls are in love with you. But that's not why *I* stayed. I stayed because you've been so good to me.

Liliom. Well, then you can go home.

Julie. I don't want to go home now.

Liliom. And what if I go away and leave you sitting here?

Julie. If you did, I wouldn't go home.

Liliom. Do you know what you remind me of? A sweetheart I had once—I'll tell you how I met her—— One night, at closing time, we had put out the lights in the carousel, and just as I was——

[*He is interrupted by the entrance of two plainclothes policemen. They take their stations on either side of the bench. They are police, searching the park for vagabonds.*]

First Policeman. What are you doing there?

Liliom. Me?

Second Policeman. Stand up when you're spoken to! [*He taps* Liliom *imperatively on the shoulder.*]

First Policeman. What's your name?

Liliom. Andreas Zavoczki. [Julie *begins to weep softly.*]

Second Policeman. Stop your bawling. We're not goin' to eat you. We are only making our rounds.

First Policeman. See that he doesn't get away. [*The* Second Policeman *steps closer to* Liliom.] What's your business?

Liliom. Barker and bouncer.

Second Policeman. They call him Liliom, Chief. We've had him up a couple of times.

First Policeman. So that's who you are! Who do you work for now?

Liliom. I work for the widow Muskat.

First Policeman. What are you hanging around here for?

Liliom. We're just sitting here—me and this girl.

First Policeman. Your sweetheart?

Liliom. No.

First Policeman. [*To* Julie.] And who are you?

Julie. Julie Zeller.

First Policeman. Servant girl?

Julie. Maid of All Work for Mister Georg Breier, Number Twenty Damjanovitsch Street.

First Policeman. Show your hands.

Second Policeman. [*After examining* Julie's *hand.*] Servant girl.

First Policeman. Why aren't you at home? What are you doing out here with him?

Julie. This is my day out, sir.

First Policeman. It would be better for you if you didn't spend it sitting around with a fellow like this.

Second Policeman. They'll be disappearing in the bushes as soon as we turn our backs.

First Policeman. He's only after your money. We know this fine fellow. He picks up you silly servant girls and takes what money you have. Tomorrow you'll probably be coming around to report him. If you do, I'll throw you out.

Julie. I haven't any money, sir.

First Policeman. Do you hear that, Liliom?

Liliom. I'm not looking for her money.

Second Policeman. [*Nudging him warningly.*] Keep your mouth shut.

First Policeman. It is my duty to warn you, my child, what kind of company

you're in. He makes a specialty of servant girls. That's why he works in a carousel. He gets hold of a girl, promises to marry her, then he takes her money and her ring.

Julie. But I haven't got a ring.

Second Policeman. You're not to talk unless you're asked a question.

First Policeman. You be thankful that I'm warning you. It's nothing to me what you do. I'm not your father, thank God. But I'm telling you what kind of a fellow he is. By tomorrow morning you'll be coming around to us to report him. Now you be sensible and go home. You needn't be afraid of him. This officer will take you home if you're afraid.

Julie. Do I *have* to go?

First Policeman. No, you don't *have* to go.

Julie. Then I'll stay, sir.

First Policeman. Well, you've been warned.

Julie. Yes, sir. Thank you, sir.

First Policeman. Come on, Berkovics.

[*The* POLICEMEN *exit.* JULIE *and* LILIOM *sit on the bench again. There is a brief pause.*]

Julie. Well, and what then?

Liliom. [*Fails to understand.*] Huh?

Julie. You were beginning to tell me a story.

Liliom. Me?

Julie. Yes, about a sweetheart. You said, one night, just as they were putting out the lights of the carousel—— That's as far as you got.

Liliom. Oh, yes, yes, just as the lights were going out, someone came along—a little girl with a big shawl—you know—— She came—eh—from—— Say—tell me—ain't you—that is, ain't you at all—afraid of me? The officer told you what kind of a fellow I am—and that I'd take your money away from you——

Julie. You couldn't take it away—I haven't got any. But if I had—I'd—I'd give it to you—I'd give it all to you.

Liliom. You would?

Julie. If you asked me for it.

Liliom. Have you ever had a fellow you gave money to?

Julie. No.

Liliom. Haven't you ever had a sweetheart?

Julie. No.

Liliom. Someone you used to go walking with. You've had one like that?

Julie. Yes.

Liliom. A soldier?

Julie. He came from the same village I did.

Liliom. That's what all the soldiers say. Where *do* you come from, anyway?

Julie. Not far from here.

[*There is a pause.*]

Liliom. Were you in love with him?

Julie. Why do you keep asking me that all the time, Mister Liliom? I wasn't in love with him. We only went walking together.

Liliom. Where did you walk?

Julie. In the park.

Liliom. And your virtue? Where did you lose that?

Julie. I haven't got any virtue.

Liliom. Well, you had once.

Julie. No, I never had. I'm a respectable girl.

Liliom. Yes, but you gave the soldier something.

Julie. Why do you question me like that, Mister Liliom?

Liliom. Did you give him something?

Julie. You have to. But I didn't love him.

Liliom. Do you love me?

Julie. No, Mister Liliom.

Liliom. Then why do you stay here with me?

Julie. Um—nothing.

[*There is a pause. The music from afar is plainly heard.*]

Liliom. Want to dance?

Julie. No. I have to be very careful.

Liliom. Of what?

Julie. My—character.

Liliom. Why?

Julie. Because I'm never going to marry. If I was going to marry, it would be different. Then I wouldn't need to worry so much about my character. It doesn't make any difference if you're married. But I shan't marry—and that's why I've got to take care to be a respectable girl.

Liliom. Suppose I were to say to you—I'll marry you.

Julie. You?

Liliom. That frightens you, doesn't it?

You're thinking of what the officer said and you're afraid.

Julie. No, I'm not, Mister Liliom. I don't pay any attention to what he said.

Liliom. But you wouldn't dare to marry anyone like me, would you?

Julie. I know that—that—if I loved anyone—it wouldn't make any difference to me what he—even if I died for it.

Liliom. But you wouldn't marry a rough guy like me—that is,—eh—if you loved me——

Julie. Yes, I would—if I loved you, Mister Liliom.

[*There is a pause.*]

Liliom. [*Whispers.*] Well,—you just said—didn't you?—that you don't love me. Well, why don't you go home then?

Julie. It's too late now, they'd all be asleep.

Liliom. Locked out?

Julie. Certainly.

[*They are silent a while.*]

Liliom. I think—that even a low-down good-for-nothing—can make a man of himself.

Julie. Certainly.

[*They are silent again. A lamplighter crosses the stage, lights the lamp over the bench, and exits.*]

Liliom. Are you hungry?

Julie. No. [*Another pause.*]

Liliom. Suppose—you had some money—and I took it from you?

Julie. Then you could take it, that's all.

Liliom. [*After another brief silence.*] All I have to do—is go back to her—that Muskat woman—she'll be glad to get me back—then I'd be earning my wages again. [*She is silent. The twilight folds darker about them.*]

Julie. [*Very softly.*] Don't go back—to her—— [*Pause.*]

Liliom. There are a lot of acacia trees around here. [*Pause.*]

Julie. Don't go back to her—— [*Pause.*]

Liliom. She'd take me back the minute I asked her. I know why—she knows, too—— [*Pause.*]

Julie. I can smell them, too—acacia blossoms——

[*There is a pause. Some blossoms drift down from the tree-top to the bench.* Liliom *picks one up and smells it.*]

Liliom. White acacias!

Julie. [*After a brief pause.*] The wind brings them down.

[*They are silent. There is a long pause before*]

SCENE TWO

Scene—*A photographer's "studio," operated by the* Hollunders, *on the fringe of the park. It is a dilapidated hovel. The general entrance is Back Left. Back Right there is a window with a sofa before it. The outlook is on the amusement park with perhaps a small Ferris-wheel or the scaffolding of a "scenic-railway" in the background.*

The door to the kitchen is up Left and a black-curtained entrance to the dark-room is down Left. Just in front of the dark-room stands the camera on its tripod. Against the back wall, between the door and window, stands the inevitable photographer's background-screen, ready to be wheeled into place.

It is forenoon. When the curtain rises, Marie *and* Julie *are discovered.*

Marie. And *he* beat up Hollinger?

Julie. Yes, he gave him an awful licking.

Marie. But Hollinger is bigger than he is.

Julie. He licked him just the same. It isn't size that counts, you know, it's cleverness. And Liliom's awful quick.

Marie. And then he was arrested?

Julie. Yes, they arrested him, but they let him go the next day. That makes twice in the two months we've been living here that Liliom's been arrested and let go again.

Marie. Why do they let him go?

Julie. Because he is innocent.

[Mother Hollunder, *a very old woman, sharp-tongued, but in reality quite warm-hearted beneath her formidable exterior, enters at back carrying a few sticks of firewood, and scolding, half to herself.*]

Mother Hollunder. Always wanting something, but never willing to work for it. He won't work, and he won't steal, but he'll use up a poor old widow's last bit of

firewood. He'll do that cheerfully enough! A big, strong lout like that lying around all day resting his lazy bones! He ought to be ashamed to look decent people in the face.

Julie. I'm sorry, Mother Hollunder. . . .

Mother Hollunder. Sorry! Better be sorry the lazy good-for-nothing ain't in jail where he belongs instead of in the way of honest, hard-working people. [*She exits into the kitchen.*]

Marie. Who's that?

Julie. Mrs. Hollunder—my aunt. This is her [*with a sweeping gesture that takes in the camera, dark-room and screen*] studio. She lets us live here for nothing.

Marie. What's she fetching the wood for?

Julie. She brings us everything we need. If it weren't for her I don't know what would become of us. She's a good-hearted soul even if her tongue is sharp.

[*There is a pause.*]

Marie. [*Shyly.*] Do you know—I've found out. He's not a soldier.

Julie. Do you still see him?

Marie. Oh, yes.

Julie. Often?

Marie. Very often. He's asked me——

Julie. To marry you?

Marie. To marry me.

Julie. You see—that proves he isn't a soldier. [*There is another pause.*]

Marie. [*Abashed, yet a bit boastfully.*] Do you know what I'm doing—I'm flirting with him.

Julie. Flirting?

Marie. Yes. He asks me to go to the park—and I say I can't go. Then he coaxes me, and promises me a new scarf for my head if I go. But I don't go—even then. . . . So then he walks all the way home with me—and I bid him good-night at the door.

Julie. Is that what you call flirting?

Marie. Um-hm! It's sinful, but it's so *thrilling.*

Julie. Do you ever quarrel?

Marie. [*Grandly.*] Only when our Passionate Love surges up.

Julie. Your passionate love?

Marie. Yes. . . . He takes my hand and we walk along together. Then he wants to swing hands, but I won't let him. I say: "Don't swing my hand"; and he says, "Don't be so stubborn." And then he tries to swing my hand again, but still I don't let him. And for a long time I don't let him—until in the end I let him. Then we walk along swinging hands—up and down, up and down—just like this. *That* is Passionate Love. It's sinful, but it's awfully *thrilling.*

Julie. You're happy, aren't you?

Marie. Happier than—anything—— But the most beautiful thing on earth is Ideal Love.

Julie. What kind is that?

Marie. Daylight comes about three in the morning this time of the year. When we've been up that long we're all through with flirting and Passionate Love—and then our Ideal Love comes to the surface. It comes like this: I'll be sitting on the bench and Wolf, he holds my hand tight—and he puts his cheek against my cheek and we don't talk . . . we just sit there very quiet. . . . And after a while he gets sleepy, and his head sinks down, and he falls asleep . . . but even in his sleep he holds tight to my hand. And I—I sit perfectly still just looking around me and taking long, deep breaths—for by that time it's morning and the trees and flowers are fresh with dew. But Wolf doesn't smell anything because he's so fast asleep. And I get awfully sleepy myself, but I don't sleep. And we sit like that for a long time. That is Ideal Love——

[*There is a long pause.*]

Julie. [*Regretfully; uneasily.*] He went out last night and he hasn't come home yet.

Marie. Here are sixteen Kreuzer. It was supposed to be carfare to take my young lady to the conservatory—eight there and eight back—but I made her walk. Here—save it with the rest.

Julie. This makes three gulden, forty-six.

Marie. Three gulden, forty-six.

Julie. He won't work at all.

Marie. Too lazy?

Julie. No. He never learned a trade, you see, and he can't just go and be a day-laborer—so he just does nothing.

Marie. That ain't right.

Julie. No. Have the Breiers got a new maid yet?

Marie. They've had three since you left. You know, Wolf's going to take a new job.

He's going to work for the city. He'll get rent free, too.

Julie. He won't go back to work at the carousel either. I ask him why, but he won't tell me—— Last Monday he hit me.

Marie. Did you hit him back?

Julie. No.

Marie. Why don't you leave him?

Julie. I don't want to.

Marie. I would. I'd leave him.

[*There is a strained silence.*]

Mother Hollunder. [*Enters, carrying a pot of water; muttering aloud.*] He can play cards, all right. He can fight, too; and take money from poor servant girls. And the police turn their heads the other way—— The carpenter was here.

Julie. Is that water for the soup?

Mother Hollunder. The carpenter was here. There's a *man* for you! Dark, handsome, lots of hair, a respectable widower with two children—and money, and a good paying business.

Julie. [*To* MARIE.] It's three gulden sixty-six, not forty-six.

Marie. Yes, that's what I make it—sixty-six.

Mother Hollunder. He wants to take her out of this and marry her. This is the fifth time he's been here. He has two children, but——

Julie. Please don't bother, Aunt Hollunder, I'll get the water myself.

Mother Hollunder. He's waiting outside now.

Julie. Send him away.

Mother Hollunder. He'll only come back again—and first thing you know that vagabond will get jealous and there'll be a fight. [*Goes out, muttering.*] Oh, he's ready enough to fight, he is. Strike a poor little girl like that! Ought to be ashamed of himself! And the police just let him go on doing as he pleases. [*Still scolding, she exits at back.*]

Marie. A carpenter wants to marry you?

Julie. Yes.

Marie. Why don't you?

Julie. Because——

Marie. Liliom doesn't support you, and he beats you—he thinks he can do whatever he likes just because he's Liliom. He's a bad one.

Julie. He's not really bad.

Marie. That night you sat on the bench together—he was gentle then.

Julie. Yes, he was gentle.

Marie. And afterwards he got wild again.

Julie. Afterwards he got wild—sometimes. But that night on the bench . . . he was gentle. He's gentle now, sometimes, very gentle. After supper, when he stands there and listens to the music of the carousel, something comes over him—and he is gentle.

Marie. Does he say anything?

Julie. He doesn't say anything. He gets thoughtful and very quiet, and his big eyes stare straight ahead of him.

Marie. Into your eyes?

Julie. Not exactly. He's unhappy because he isn't working. That's really why he hit me on Monday.

Marie. That's a fine reason for hitting you! Beats his wife because he isn't working, the ruffian!

Julie. It preys on his mind——

Marie. Did he hurt you?

Julie. [*Very eagerly.*] Oh, no.

Mrs. Muskat. [*Enters haughtily.*] Good morning. Is Liliom home?

Julie. No.

Mrs. Muskat. Gone out?

Julie. He hasn't come home yet.

Mrs. Muskat. I'll wait for him. [*She sits down.*]

Marie. You've got a lot of gall—to come here.

Mrs. Muskat. Are you the lady of the house, my dear? Better look out or you'll get a slap in the mouth.

Marie. How dare you set foot in Julie's house?

Mrs. Muskat. [*To* JULIE.] Pay no attention to her, my child. You know what brings me here. That vagabond, that good-for-nothing. I've come to give him his bread and butter back.

Marie. He's not dependent on you for his bread.

Mrs. Muskat. [*To* JULIE.] Just ignore her, my child. She's just ignorant.

Marie. [*Going.*] Good-bye.

Julie. Good-bye.

Marie. [*In the doorway, calling back.*] Sixty-six.

Julie. Yes, sixty-six.

Marie. Good-bye. [*She goes out.* JULIE *starts to go toward the kitchen.*]

Mrs. Muskat. I paid him a krone a day, and on Sunday a gulden. And he got all the beer and cigars he wanted from the customers. [JULIE *pauses on the threshold, but does not answer.*] And he'd rather starve than beg my pardon. Well, I don't insist on that. I'll take him back without it. [JULIE *does not answer.*] The fact is the people ask for him—and, you see, I've got to consider business first. It's nothing to me if he starves. I wouldn't be here at all, if it wasn't for business—— [*She pauses, for* LILIOM *and* FICSUR *have entered.*]

Julie. Mrs. Muskat is here.

Liliom. I see she is.

Julie. You might say good-morning.

Liliom. What for? And what do *you* want, anyhow?

Julie. I don't want anything.

Liliom. Then keep your mouth shut. Next thing you'll be starting to nag again about my being out all night and out of work and living on your relations——

Julie. I'm not saying anything.

Liliom. But it's all on the tip of your tongue—I know you—now don't start or you'll get another.

[*He paces angrily up and down. They are all a bit afraid of him, and shrink and look away as he passes them.* FICSUR *shambles from place to place, his eyes cast down as if he were searching for something on the floor.*]

Mrs. Muskat. [*Suddenly, to* FICSUR.] You're always dragging him out to play cards and drink with you. I'll have you locked up, I will.

Ficsur. I don't want to talk to you. You're too common. [*He goes out by the door at back and lingers there in plain view. There is a pause.*]

Julie. Mrs. Muskat is here.

Liliom. Well, why doesn't she open her mouth, if she has anything to say?

Mrs. Muskat. Why do you go around with this man Ficsur? He'll get you mixed up in one of his robberies first thing you know.

Liliom. What's it to you who I go with? I do what I please. What do you want?

Mrs. Muskat. You know what I want.

Liliom. No, I don't.

Mrs. Muskat. What do you suppose I want? Think I've come just to pay a social call?

Liliom. Do I owe you anything?

Mrs. Muskat. Yes, you do—but that's not what I came for. You're a fine one to come to for money! You earn so much these days! You know very well what I'm here for.

Liliom. You've got Hollinger at the carousel, haven't you?

Mrs. Muskat. Sure I have.

Liliom. Well, what else do you want? He's as good as I am.

Mrs. Muskat. You're quite right, my boy. He's every bit as good as you are. I'd not dream of letting him go. But one isn't enough any more. There's work enough for two——

Liliom. One was enough when *I* was there.

Mrs. Muskat. Well, I might let Hollinger go——

Liliom. Why let him go, if he's so good?

Mrs. Muskat. [*Shrugs her shoulders.*] Yes, he's good. [*Not once until now has she looked at* LILIOM.]

Liliom. [*To* JULIE.] Ask your aunt if I can have a cup of coffee. [JULIE *exits into the kitchen.*] So Hollinger is good, is he?

Mrs. Muskat. [*Crosses to him and looks him in the face.*] Why don't you stay home and sleep at night? You're a sight to look at.

Liliom. He's good, is he?

Mrs. Muskat. Push your hair back from your forehead.

Liliom. Let my hair be. It's nothing to you.

Mrs. Muskat. All right. But if I'd told you to let it hang down over your eyes you'd have pushed it back—I hear you've been beating her, this—this——

Liliom. None of your business.

Mrs. Muskat. You're a fine fellow! Beating a skinny little thing like that! If you're tired of her, leave her, but there's no use beating the poor——

Liliom. Leave her, eh? You'd like that, wouldn't you?

Mrs. Muskat. Don't flatter yourself. [*Quite embarrassed.*] Serves me right, too. If I had any sense I wouldn't have run after you. . . . My God, the things one must do for the sake of business! If I

could only sell the carousel I wouldn't be sitting here. . . . Come, Liliom, if you have any sense, you'll come back. I'll pay you well.

Liliom. The carousel is crowded just the same. . . . *without me?*

Mrs. Muskat. Crowded, yes—but it's not the same.

Liliom. Then you admit that you *do* miss me.

Mrs. Muskat. Miss you? Not I. But the silly girls miss you. They're always asking for you. Well, are you going to be sensible and come back?

Liliom. And leave—her?

Mrs. Muskat. You beat her, don't you?

Liliom. No, I don't beat her. What's all this damn fool talk about beating her? I hit her once—that was all—and now the whole city seems to be talking about it. You don't call that beating her, do you?

Mrs. Muskat. All right, all right. I take it back. I don't want to get mixed up in it.

Liliom. Beating her! As if I'd beat her——

Mrs. Muskat. I can't make out why you're so concerned about her. You've been married to her two months—it's plain to see that you're sick of it—and out there is the carousel—and the show booths—and money—and you'd throw it all away. For what? Heavens, how can anyone be such a fool? [*Looks at him appraisingly.*] Where have you been all night? You look awful.

Liliom. It's no business of yours.

Mrs. Muskat. You never used to look like that. This life is telling on you. [*Pauses.*] Do you know—I've got a new organ.

Liliom. [*Softly.*] I know.

Mrs. Muskat. How did you know?

Liliom. You can hear it—from here.

Mrs. Muskat. It's a good one, eh?

Liliom. [*Wistfully.*] Very good. Fine. It roars and snorts—so fine.

Mrs. Muskat. You should hear it close by—it's heavenly. Even the carousel seems to know . . . it goes quicker. I got rid of those two horses—you know, the ones with the broken ears?

Liliom. What have you put in their places?

Mrs. Muskat. Guess.

Liliom. Zebras?

Mrs. Muskat. No—an automobile.

Liliom. [*Transported.*] An automobile——

Mrs. Muskat. Yes. If you've got any sense you'll come back. What good are you doing here? Out there is your *art,* the only thing you're fit for. You are an artist, not a respectable married man.

Liliom. Leave her—this little——

Mrs. Muskat. She'll be better off. She'll go back and be a servant girl again. As for you—you're an artist and you belong among artists. All the beer you want, cigars, a krone a day and a gulden on Sunday, and the girls, Liliom, the girls—I've always treated you right, haven't I? I bought you a watch, and——

Liliom. She's not that kind. She'd never be a servant girl again.

Mrs. Muskat. I suppose you think she'd kill herself. Don't worry. Heavens, if every girl was to commit suicide just because her—— [*Finishes with a gesture.*]

Liliom. [*Stares at her a moment, considering, then with sudden, smiling animation.*] So the people don't like Hollinger?

Mrs. Muskat. You know very well they don't, you rascal.

Liliom. Well——

Mrs. Muskat. You've always been happy at the carousel. It's a great life—pretty girls and beer and cigars and music—a great life and an easy one. I'll tell you what—come back and I'll give you a ring that used to belong to my dear departed husband. Well, will you come?

Liliom. She's not that kind. She'd never be a servant girl again. But—but—for my part—if I decide—that needn't make any difference. I can go on living with her even if I do go back to my art——

Mrs. Muskat. My God!

Liliom. What's the matter?

Mrs. Muskat. Who ever heard of a married man—I suppose you think all girls would be pleased to know that you were running home to your wife every night. It's ridiculous! When the people found out they'd laugh themselves sick——

Liliom. I know what you want.

Mrs. Muskat. [*Refuses to meet his gaze.*] You flatter yourself.

Liliom. You'll give me that ring, too?

Mrs. Muskat. [*Pushes the hair back from his forehead.*] Yes.

Liliom. I'm not happy in this house.

Mrs. Muskat. [*Still stroking his hair.*] Nobody takes care of you.

[*They are silent.* JULIE *enters, carrying a cup of coffee.* MRS. MUSKAT *removes her hand from* LILIOM'S *head. There is a pause.*]

Liliom. Do you want anything?

Julie. No. [*There is a pause. She goes out slowly into the kitchen.*]

Mrs. Muskat. The old woman says there is a carpenter, a widower, who——

Liliom. I know—I know——

Julie. [*Reëntering.*] Liliom, before I forget, I have something to tell you.

Liliom. All right.

Julie. I've been wanting to tell you—in fact, I was going to tell you yesterday——

Liliom. Go ahead.

Julie. But I must tell you alone—if you'll come in—it will only take a minute.

Liliom. Don't you see I'm busy now? Here I am talking business and you interrupt with——

Julie. It'll only take a minute.

Liliom. Get out of here, or——

Julie. But I tell you it will only take a minute——

Liliom. Will you get out of here?

Julie. [*Courageously.*] No.

Liliom. [*Rising.*] What's that!

Julie. No.

Mrs. Muskat. [*Rises, too.*] Now don't start fighting. I'll go out and look at the photographs in the show-case a while and come back later for your answer. [*She goes out at back.*]

Julie. You can hit me again if you like—don't look at me like that. I'm not afraid of you. . . . I'm not afraid of anyone. I told you I had something to tell you.

Liliom. Well, out with it—quick.

Julie. I can't tell you so quick. Why don't you drink your coffee?

Liliom. Is that what you wanted to tell me?

Julie. No. By the time you've drunk your coffee I'll have told you.

Liliom. [*Gets the coffee and sips it.*] Well?

Julie. Yesterday my head ached—and you asked me——

Liliom. Yes——

Julie. Well—you see—that's what it is—

Liliom. Are you sick?

Julie. No. . . . But you wanted to know what my headaches came from—and you said I seemed—changed.

Liliom. Did I? I guess I meant the carpenter.

Julie. I've been—what? The carpenter? No. It's something entirely different—it's awful hard to tell—but you'll have to know sooner or later—I'm not a bit—scared—because it's a perfectly natural thing——

Liliom. [*Puts the coffee cup on the table.*] What?

Julie. When—when a man and woman—live together——

Liliom. Yes.

Julie. I'm going to have a baby. [*She goes out swiftly at back. There is a pause.* FICSUR *appears at the open window and looks in.*]

Liliom. Ficsur! [FICSUR *sticks his head in.*] Say, Ficsur,—Julie is going to have a baby.

Ficsur. Yes? What of it?

Liliom. Nothing. [*Suddenly.*] Get out of here.

[FICSUR'S *head is quickly withdrawn.* MRS. MUSKAT *reënters.*]

Mrs. Muskat. Has she gone?

Liliom. Yes.

Mrs. Muskat. I might as well give you ten kronen in advance. [*Opens her purse.* LILIOM *takes up his coffee cup.*] Here you are. [*She proffers some coins.* LILIOM *ignores her.*] Why don't you take it?

Liliom. [*Very nonchalantly, his cup poised ready to drink.*] Go home, Mrs. Muskat.

Mrs. Muskat. What's the matter with you?

Liliom. Go home [*sips his coffee*] and let me finish my coffee in peace. Don't you see I'm at breakfast?

Mrs. Muskat. Have you gone crazy?

Liliom. Will you get out of here? [*Turns to her threateningly.*]

Mrs. Muskat. [*Restoring the coins to her purse.*] I'll never speak to you again as long as you live.

Liliom. That worries me a lot.

Mrs. Muskat. Good-bye!

Liliom. Good-bye. [*As she goes out, he calls.*] Ficsur! [FICSUR *enters.*] Tell me, Ficsur. You said you knew a way to get a whole lot of money——

Ficsur. Sure I do.

Liliom. How much?

Ficsur. More than you ever had in your life before. You leave it to an old hand like me.

Mother Hollunder. [*Enters from the kitchen.*] In the morning he must have his coffee, and at noon his soup, and in the evening coffee again—and plenty of firewood—and I'm expected to furnish it all. Give me back my cup and saucer.

[*The show-booths of the amusement park have opened for business. The familiar noises begin to sound; clear above them all, but far in the distance, sounds the organ of the carousel.*]

Liliom. Now, Aunt Hollunder.

[*From now until the fall of the curtain it is apparent that the sound of the organ makes him more and more uneasy.*]

Mother Hollunder. And you, you vagabond, get out of here this minute or I'll call my son——

Ficsur. I have nothing to do with the likes of him. He's too common. [*But he slinks out at back.*]

Liliom. Aunt Hollunder!

Mother Hollunder. What now?

Liliom. When your son was born—when you brought him into the world——

Mother Hollunder. Well?

Liliom. Nothing.

Mother Hollunder. [*Muttering as she goes out.*] Sleep it off, you good-for-nothing lout. Drink and play cards all night long—that's all you know how to do—and take the bread out of poor people's mouths—you can do that, too. [*Exit.*]

Liliom. Ficsur!

Ficsur. [*At the window.*] Julie's going to have a baby. You told me before.

Liliom. This scheme—about the cashier of the leather factory—there's money in it——

Ficsur. Lots of money—but—it takes two to pull it off.

Liliom. [*Meditatively.*] Yes. [*Uneasily.*] All right, Ficsur. Go away—and come back later.

[Ficsur *vanishes. The organ in the distant carousel drones incessantly.* Liliom *listens a while, then goes to the door and calls.*]

Liliom. Aunt Hollunder! [*With naïve joy.*] Julie's going to have a baby. [*Then he goes to the window, jumps on the sofa, looks out. Suddenly, in a voice that overtops the droning of the organ, he shouts as if addressing the far-off carousel.*] I'm going to be a father.

Julie. [*Enters from the kitchen.*] Liliom! What's the matter? What's happened?

Liliom. [*Coming down from the sofa.*] Nothing.

[*Throws himself on the sofa, buries his face in the cushion.* Julie *watches him a moment, comes over to him and covers him with a shawl. Then she goes on tiptoe to the door at back and remains standing in the doorway, looking out and listening to the droning of the organ.*]

SCENE THREE

Scene—*The setting is the same, later that afternoon.* Liliom *is sitting opposite* Ficsur, *who is teaching him a song.* Julie *hovers in the background, engaged in some household task.*

Ficsur. Listen now. Here's the third verse. [*Sings hoarsely.*]

Look out, look out, my pretty lad,
The damn police are on your trail;
The nicest girl you ever had
Has now commenced to weap and wail:
Look out here comes the damn police,
The damn police,
The damn police,
Look out here comes the damn police,
They'll get you every time.

Liliom. [*Sings.*]

Look out, look out, my pretty lad,
The damn police——

Ficsur, Liliom. [*Sing together.*]

Are on your trail
The nicest girl you ever had
Has now commenced to weep and wail.

Liliom. [*Alone.*]

Look out here comes the damn police,
The damn police,
The damn police——

[Julie, *troubled and uneasy, looks from one to the other, then exits into the kitchen.*]

Ficsur. [*When she has gone, comes quickly over to* Liliom *and speaks fur-*

tively.] As you go down Franzen Street you come to the railroad embankment. Beyond that—all the way to the leather factory—there's not a thing in sight, not even a watchman's hut.

Liliom. And does he always come that way?

Ficsur. Yes. Not along the embankment, but down below along the path across the fields. Since last year he's been going alone. Before that he always used to have someone with him.

Liliom. Every Saturday?

Ficsur. Every Saturday.

Liliom. And the money? Where does he keep it?

Ficsur. In a leather bag. The whole week's pay for the workmen at the factory.

Liliom. Much?

Ficsur. Sixteen thousand kronen. Quite a haul, what?

Liliom. What's his name?

Ficsur. Linzman. He's a Jew.

Liliom. The cashier?

Ficsur. Yes—but when he gets a knife between his ribs—or if I smash his skull for him—he won't be a cashier any more.

Liliom. Does he have to be killed?

Ficsur. No, he doesn't *have* to be. He can give up the money *without* being killed—but most of these cashiers are peculiar—they'd rather be killed.

[JULIE *reënters, pretends to get something on the other side of the room, then exits at back. During the ensuing dialogue she keeps coming in and out in the same way, showing plainly that she is suspicious and anxious. She attempts to overhear what they are saying and, in spite of their caution, does catch a word here and there, which adds to her disquiet.* FICSUR, *catching sight of her, abruptly changes the conversation.*]

Ficsur. And the next verse is:

And when you're in the prison cell
They'll feed you bread and water.

Ficsur, Liliom. [*Sing together.*]

They'll make your little sweetheart tell
Them all the things you brought her.
Look out here comes the damn police.
The damn police,
The damn police.
Look out here comes the damn police
They'll get you every time.

Liliom. [*Sings alone.*]

And when you're in the prison cell
They'll feed you bread and water——"

[*Breaks off as* JULIE *exits.*]

And when it's done, do we start right off for America?

Ficsur. No.

Liliom. What then?

Ficsur. We bury the money for six months. That's the usual time. And after the sixth month we dig it up again.

Liliom. And then?

Ficsur. Then you go on living just as usual for six months more—you don't touch a heller of the money.

Liliom. In six months the baby will be born.

Ficsur. Then we'll take the baby with us, too. Three months before the time you'll go to work so as to be able to say you saved up your wages to get to America.

Liliom. Which of us goes up and talks to him?

Ficsur. One of us talks to him with his mouth and the other talks with his knife. Depends on which you'd rather do. I'll tell you what—you talk to him with your mouth.

Liliom. Do you hear that?

Ficsur. What?

Liliom. Outside . . . like the rattle of swords. [FICSUR *listens. After a pause,* LILIOM *continues.*] What do I say to him?

Ficsur. You say good evening to him and: "Excuse me, sir; can you tell me the time?"

Liliom. And then what?

Ficsur. By that time I'll have stuck him—and then you take *your* knife——

[*He stops as a* POLICEMAN *enters at back.*]

Policeman. Good-day!

Ficsur, Liliom. [*In unison.*] Good-day!

Ficsur. [*Calling toward the kitchen.*] Hey, photographer, come out. . . . Here's a customer.

[*There is a pause. The* POLICEMAN *waits.* FICSUR *sings softly.*]

And when you're in the prison cell
They'll feed you bread and water
They'll make your little sweetheart tell

Liliom, Ficsur. [*Sing together, low.*]

Them all the things you brought her. Look out here comes the——

[*They hum the rest so as not to let the* POLICEMAN *hear the words "the damn police." As they sing,* MRS. HOLLUNDER *and her son enter.*]

Policeman. Do you make cabinet photographs?

Young Hollunder. Certainly, sir. [*Points to a rack of photographs on the wall.*] Take your choice, sir. Would you like one full length?

Policeman. Yes, full length.

[MOTHER HOLLUNDER *pushes out the camera while her son poses the* POLICEMAN, *runs from him to camera and back again, now altering the pose, now ducking under the black cloth and pushing the camera nearer. Meanwhile* MOTHER HOLLUNDER *has fetched a plate from the dark-room and thrust it in the camera. While this is going on,* LILIOM *and* FICSUR, *their heads together, speak in very low tones.*]

Liliom. Belong around here?

Ficsur. Not around here.

Liliom. Where, then?

Ficsur. Suburban. [*There is a pause.*]

Liliom. [*Bursts out suddenly in a rather grotesquely childish and overstrained lament.*] O God, what a dirty life I'm leading—God, God!

Ficsur. [*Reassuring him benevolently.*] Over in America it will be better, all right.

Liliom. What's over there?

Ficsur. [*Virtuously.*] Factories . . . industries——

Young Hollunder. [*To the* POLICEMAN.] Now, quite still, please. One, two, three. [*Deftly removes the cover of the lens and in a few seconds restores it.*] Thank you.

Mother Hollunder. The picture will be ready in five minutes.

Policeman. Good. I'll come back in five minutes. How much do I owe you?

Young Hollunder. [*With exaggerated deference.*] You don't need to pay in advance, Mr. Commissioner.

[*The* POLICEMAN *salutes condescendingly and goes out at back.* MOTHER HOLLUNDER *carries the plate into the dark-room.* YOUNG HOLLUNDER, *after pushing the camera back in place, follows her.*]

Mother Hollunder. [*Muttering angrily as she passes* FICSUR *and* LILIOM.] You hang around and dirty the whole place up! Why don't you go take a walk? Things are going so well with you that you have to sing, eh? [*Confronting* FICSUR *suddenly.*] Weren't you frightened sick when you saw the policeman?

Ficsur. [*With loathing.*] Go 'way, or I'll step on you. [*She goes out into the dark-room.*]

Liliom. They like Hollinger at the carousel?

Ficsur. I should say they do.

Liliom. Did you see the Muskat woman, too?

Ficsur. Sure. She takes care of Hollinger's hair.

Liliom. Combs his hair?

Ficsur. She fixes him all up.

Liliom. Let her fix him all she likes.

Ficsur. [*Urging him toward the kitchen door.*] Go on. Now's your chance.

Liliom. What for?

Ficsur. To get the knife.

Liliom. What knife?

Ficsur. The kitchen knife. I've got a pocket-knife, but if he shows fight, we'll let him have the big knife.

Liliom. What for? If he gets ugly, I'll bat him one over the head that'll make him squint for the rest of his life.

Ficsur. You've got to have something on you. You can't slit his throat with a bat over the head.

Liliom. Must his throat be slit?

Ficsur. No, it *mustn't.* But if he asks for it. [*There is a pause.*] You'd like to sail on the big steamer, wouldn't you? And you want to see the factories over there, don't you? But you're not willing to inconvenience yourself a little for them.

Liliom. If I take the knife, Julie will see me.

Ficsur. Take it so she won't see you.

Liliom. [*Advances a few paces toward the kitchen. The* POLICEMAN *enters at back.* LILIOM *knocks on the door of the dark-room.*] Here's the policeman!

Mother Hollunder. [*Coming out.*] One minute more, please. Just a minute. [*She*

reënters the dark room. LILIOM *hesitates a moment, then exits into the kitchen. The* POLICEMAN *scrutinizes* FICSUR *mockingly.* FICSUR *returns his stare, walks a few paces toward him, then deliberately turns his back. Suddenly he wheels around, points at the* POLICEMAN *and addresses him in a teasing, childish tone.*] Christiana Street at the corner of Retti!

Policeman. [*Amazed, self-conscious.*] How do you know that?

Ficsur. I used to practice my profession in that neighborhood.

Policeman. What is your profession?

Ficsur. Professor of pianola——

[*The* POLICEMAN *glares, aware that the man is joking with him, twirls his moustache indignantly.* YOUNG HOLLUNDER *comes out of the dark-room and gives him the finished pictures.*]

Young Hollunder. Here you are, sir.

[*The* POLICEMAN *examines the photographs, pays for them, starts to go, stops, glares at* FICSUR *and exits. When he is gone,* FICSUR *goes to the doorway and looks out after him.* YOUNG HOLLUNDER *exits.* LILIOM *reënters, buttoning his coat.*]

Ficsur. [*Turns, sees* LILIOM.] What are you staring at?

Liliom. I'm not staring.

Ficsur. What then are you doing?

Liliom. I'm thinking it over.

Ficsur. [*Comes very close to him.*] Tell me then—what will you say to him?

Liliom. [*Unsteadily.*] I'll say—"Good evening—Excuse me, sir—Can you tell me the time?" And suppose he answers me, what do I say to him?

Ficsur. He won't answer you.

Liliom. Don't you think so?

Ficsur. No. [*Feeling for the knife under* LILIOM'S *coat.*] Where is it? Where did you put it?

Liliom. [*Stonily.*] Left side.

Ficsur. That's right—over your heart. [*Feels it.*] Ah—there it is—there—there's the blade—quite a big fellow, isn't it—ah, here it begins to get narrower. [*Reaches the tip of the knife.*] And here is its eye—that's what it sees with. [JULIE *enters from the kitchen, passes them slowly, watching them in silent terror, then stops.* FICSUR *nudges* LILIOM.] Sing, come on, sing!

Liliom. [*In a quavering voice.*]
Look out for the damn police.

Ficsur. [*Joining in cheerily, loudly, marking time with the swaying of his body.*]
Look out, look out, my pretty lad.

Liliom. —look out, my pretty lad.

[JULIE *goes out at back.* LILIOM'S *glance follows her. When she has gone, he turns to* FICSUR.] At night—in my dreams—if his ghost comes back—what will I do then?

Ficsur. His ghost won't never come back.

Liliom. Why not?

Ficsur. A Jew's ghost don't come back.

Liliom. Well then—afterwards——

Ficsur. [*Impatiently.*] What do you mean—afterwards?

Liliom. In the next world—when I come up before the Lord God—what'll I say then?

Ficsur. The likes of you will never come up before Him.

Liliom. Why not?

Ficsur. Have you ever come up before the high court?

Liliom. No.

Ficsur. Our kind comes up before the police magistrate—and the highest we *ever* get is the criminal court.

Liliom. Will it be the same in the next world?

Ficsur. Just the same. We'll come up before a police magistrate, same as we did in this world.

Liliom. A police magistrate?

Ficsur. Sure. For the rich folks—the Heavenly Court. For us poor people—only a police magistrate. For the rich folks—fine music and angels. For us——

Liliom. For us?

Ficsur. For us, my son, there's only justice. In the next world there'll be lots of justice, yes, nothing but justice. And where there's justice there must be police magistrates; and where there're police magistrates, people like us get——

Liliom. [*Interrupting.*] Good evening. Excuse me, sir, can you tell me the time? [*Lays his hand over his heart.*]

Ficsur. What do you put your hand there for?

Liliom. My heart is jumping—under the knife.

Ficsur. Put it on the other side then.

[*Looks out at the sky.*] It's time we started —we'll walk slow——

Liliom. It's too early.

Ficsur. Come on.

[*As they are about to go,* JULIE *appears in the doorway at back, obstructing the way.*]

Julie. Where are you going with him?

Liliom. Where am I going with him?

Julie. Stay home.

Liliom. No.

Julie. Stay home. It's going to rain soon, and you'll get wet.

Ficsur. It won't rain.

Julie. How do you know?

Ficsur. I always get notice in advance.

Julie. Stay home. This evening the carpenter's coming. I've asked him to give you work.

Liliom. I'm not a carpenter.

Julie. [*More and more anxious, though she tries to conceal it.*] Stay home. Marie's coming with her intended to have their picture taken. She wants to introduce us to her intended husband.

Liliom. I've seen enough intended husbands——

Julie. Stay home. Marie's bringing some money, and I'll give it all to you.

Liliom. [*Approaching the door.*] I'm going—for a walk—with Ficsur. We'll be right back.

Julie. [*Forcing a smile to keep back her tears.*] If you stay home, I'll get you a glass of beer—or wine, if you prefer.

Ficsur. Coming or not?

Julie. I'm not angry with you any more for hitting me.

Liliom. [*Gruffly, but his gruffness is simulated to hide the fact that he cannot bear the sight of her suffering.*] Stand out of the way—or I'll—— [*He clenches his fist.*] Let me out!

Julie. [*Trembling.*] What have you got under your coat?

Liliom. [*Produces from his pocket a greasy pack of cards.*] Cards.

Julie. [*Trembling, speaks very low.*] What's under your coat?

Liliom. Let me out!

Julie. [*Obstructing the way. Speaks quickly, eagerly, in a last effort to detain him.*] Marie's intended knows about a place for a married couple without children to be caretakers of a house on Arader Street. Rent free, a kitchen of your own, and the privilege of keeping chickens——

Liliom. Get out of the way!

[JULIE *stands aside.* LILIOM *goes out.* FICSUR *follows him.* JULIE *remains standing meditatively in the doorway.* MOTHER HOLLUNDER *comes out of the kitchen.*]

Mother Hollunder. I can't find my kitchen knife anywhere. Have you seen anything of it?

Julie. [*Horrified.*] No.

Mother Hollunder. It was on the kitchen table just a few minutes ago. No one was in there except Liliom.

Julie. He didn't take it.

Mother Hollunder. No one else was in there.

Julie. What would Liliom want with a kitchen knife?

Mother Hollunder. He'd sell it and spend the money on drink.

Julie. It just so happens—see how unjust you are to him—it just so happens that I went through all of Liliom's pockets just now—I wanted to see if he had any money on him. But he had nothing but a pack of cards.

Mother Hollunder. [*Returns to the kitchen, grumbling.*] Cards in his pocket—cards! The fine gentlemen have evidently gone off to their club to play a little game.

[*She goes out. After a pause* MARIE, *happy and beaming, appears in the doorway at back, and enters, followed by* WOLF.]

Marie. Here we are! [*She takes* WOLF *by the hand and leads him, grinning shyly, to* JULIE, *who has turned at her call.*] Hello!

Julie. Hello.

Marie. Well, we're here.

Julie. Yes.

Wolf. [*Bows awkwardly and extends his hand.*] My name is Wolf Beifeld.

Julie. My name is Julie Zeller.

[*They shake hands. There is an embarrassed silence. Then, to relieve the situation,* WOLF *takes* JULIE'S *hand again and shakes it vigorously.*]

Marie. Well—this is Wolf.

Wolf. Yes.

Julie. Yes. [*Another awkward silence.*]

Marie. Where is Liliom?

Wolf. Yes, where is your husband?

Julie. He's out.

Marie. Where?

Julie. Just for a walk.

Marie. Is he?

Julie. Yes.

Wolf. Oh! [*Another silence.*]

Marie. Wolf's got a new place. After the first of the month he won't have to stand outside any more. He's going to work in a club after the first of the month.

Wolf. [*Apologetically.*] She don't know yet how to explain these things just right—hehehe—— Beginning the first I'm to be second steward at the Burger Club—a good job, if one conducts oneself properly.

Julie. Yes?

Wolf. The pay—is quite good—but the main thing is the tips. When they play cards there's always a bit for the steward. The tips, I may say, amount to twenty, even thirty kronen every night.

Marie. Yes.

Wolf. We've rented two rooms for ourselves to start with—and if things go well—

Marie. Then we'll buy a house in the country.

Wolf. If one only tends to business and keeps honest. Of course, in the country we'll miss the city life, but if the good Lord sends us children—it's much healthier for children in the country.

[*There is a brief pause.*]

Marie. Wolf's nice looking, isn't he?

Julie. Yes.

Marie. And he's a good boy, Wolf.

Julie. Yes.

Marie. The only thing is—he's a Jew.

Julie. Oh, well, you can get used to that.

Marie. Well, aren't you going to wish us luck?

Julie. Of course I do. [*She embraces* Marie.]

Marie. And aren't you going to kiss Wolf, too?

Julie. Him, too. [*She embraces* Wolf, *remains quite still a moment, her head resting on his shoulder.*]

Wolf. Why are you crying, my dear Mrs.—— [*He looks questionably at* Marie *over* Julie's *shoulder.*]

Marie. Because she has such a good heart. [*She becomes sentimental, too.*]

Wolf. [*Touched.*] We thank you for your heartfelt sympathy——

[*He cannot restrain his own tears. There is a pause before* Mother Hollunder *and her son enter.* Young Hollunder *immediately busies himself with the camera.*]

Mother Hollunder. Now if you don't mind, we'll do it right away, before it gets too dark. [*She leads* Marie *and* Wolf *into position before the background-screen. Here they immediately fall into an awkward pose, smiling mechanically.*] Full length?

Marie. Please. Both figures full length.

Mother Hollunder. Bride and groom?

Marie. Yes.

Mother Hollunder, Young Hollunder. [*Speak in unison, in loud professionally-expressionless tones.*] The lady looks at the gentleman and the gentleman looks straight into the camera.

Mother Hollunder. [*Poses first* Marie, *then* Wolf.] Now, if you please.

Young Hollunder. [*Who has crept under the black cloth, calls in muffled tones.*] That's good—that's very good!

Marie. [*Stonily rigid, but very happy, trying to speak without altering her expression.*] Julie, dear, do we look all right?

Julie. Yes, dear.

Young Hollunder. Now, if you please, hold still. I'll count up to three and then you must hold perfectly still. [*Grasps the cover of the lens and calls threateningly.*] One—two—three!

[*He removes the cover; there is utter silence. But as he speaks the word "one" there is heard, very faintly in the distance, the refrain of the thieves' song which* Ficsur *and* Liliom *have been singing. The refrain continues until the fall of the curtain. As he speaks the word "three" everybody is perfectly rigid save* Julie, *who lets her head sink slowly to the table. The distant refrain dies out.*]

SCENE FOUR

Scene—*In the fields on the outskirts of the city. At back a railroad embankment crosses the stage obliquely. At center of the embankment stands a red and white signal flag, and near it a little red signal lamp which is not yet lighted. Here also*

a wooden stairway leads up to the embankment.

At the foot of the embankment to the right is a pile of used railroad ties. In the background a telegraph pole, beyond it a view of trees, fences and fields; still further back a factory building and a cluster of little dwellings.

It is six o'clock of the same afternoon. Dusk has begun to fall.

LILIOM *and* FICSUR *are discovered on the stairway looking after the train which has just passed.*

Liliom. Can you still hear it snort?

Ficsur. Listen!

[*They watch the vanishing train.*]

Liliom. If you put your ear on the tracks you can hear it go all the way to Vienna.

Ficsur. Huh!

Liliom. The one that just puffed past us —it goes all the way to Vienna.

Ficsur. No further?

Liliom. Yes—further, too.

[*There is a pause.*]

Ficsur. It must be near six. [*As* LILIOM *ascends the steps.*] Where are you going?

Liliom. Don't be afraid. I'm not giving you the slip.

Ficsur. Why should you give me the slip? That cashier has sixteen thousand kronen on him. Just be patient till he comes, then you can talk to him, nice and polite.

Liliom. I say, "Good evening—excuse me, sir; what time is it?"

Ficsur. Then he tells you what time it is.

Liliom. Suppose he don't come?

Ficsur. [*Coming down the steps.*] Nonsense! He's got to come. He pays off the workmen every Saturday. And this is Saturday, ain't it? [LILIOM *has ascended to the top of the stairway and is gazing along the tracks.*] What are you looking at up there?

Liliom. The tracks go on and on—there's no end to them.

Ficsur. What's that to stare about?

Liliom. Nothing—only I always look after the train. When you stand down there at night it snorts past you, and spits down.

Ficsur. Spits?

Liliom. Yes, the engine. It spits down. And then the whole train rattles past and away—and you stand there—spat on—but it draws your eyes along with it.

Ficsur. Draws your eyes along?

Liliom. Yes—whether you want to or not, you've got to look after it—as long as the tiniest bit of it is in sight.

Ficsur. Swell people sit in it.

Liliom. And read newspapers.

Ficsur. And smoke cigars.

Liliom. And inhale the smoke.

[*There is a short silence.*]

Ficsur. Is he coming?

Liliom. Not yet. [*Silence again.* LILIOM *comes down, speaks low, confidentially.*] Do you hear the telegraph wires?

Ficsur. I hear them when the wind blows.

Liliom. Even when the wind doesn't blow you can hear them humming, humming—— People talk through them.

Ficsur. Who?

Liliom. Jews.

Ficsur. No—they telegraph.

Liliom. They talk through them and from some other place they get answered. And it all goes through the iron strings—that's why they hum like that—they—humm——

Ficsur. What do they hum?

Liliom. They hum! ninety-nine, ninety-nine. Just listen.

Ficsur. What for?

Liliom. That sparrow's listening, too. He's cocked one eye and looks at me as if to say: "I'd like to know what they're talking about."

Ficsur. You're looking at a bird?

Liliom. He's looking at me, too.

Ficsur. Listen, you're sick! There's something the matter with you. Do you know what it is? Money. That bird has no money, either; that's why he cocks his eye.

Liliom. Maybe.

Ficsur. Whoever has money don't cock his eye.

Liliom. What then does he do?

Ficsur. He does anything he wants. But nobody works unless he has money. We'll soon have money ourselves.

Liliom. I say, "Good evening. Excuse me, sir, can you tell me what time it is!"

Ficsur. He's not coming yet. Got the cards? [LILIOM *gives him the pack of cards.*] Got any money?

Liliom. [*Takes some coins from his trousers pocket and counts.*] Eleven.

Ficsur. [*Sits astride on the pile of ties and looks off left.*] All right—eleven.

Liliom. [*Sitting astride on the ties facing him.*] Put it up.

Ficsur. [*Puts the money on the ties; rapidly shuffles the cards.*] We'll play twenty-one. I'll bank. [*He deals deftly.*]

Liliom. [*Looks at his card.*] Good. I'll bet the bank.

Ficsur. Must have an ace! [*Deals him a second card.*]

Liliom. *Another one.* [*He gets another card.*] Another. [*Gets still another.*] Over! [*Throws down his cards.* Ficsur *gathers in the money.*] Come on!

Ficsur. Come on what? Got no more money, have you?

Liliom. No.

Ficsur. Then the game's over—unless you want to——

Liliom. What?

Ficsur. Play on credit.

Liliom. You'll trust me?

Ficsur. No—but—I'll deduct it.

Liliom. Deduct it from what?

Ficsur. From your share of the money. If *you* win you deduct from my share.

Liliom. [*Looks over his shoulder to see if the cashier is coming; nervous and ashamed.*] All right. How much is bank?

Ficsur. That cashier is bringing us sixteen thousand kronen. Eight thousand of that is mine. Well, then, the bank is eight thousand.

Liliom. Good.

Ficsur. Whoever has the most luck will have the most money. [*He deals.*]

Liliom. Six hundred kronen. [Ficsur *gives him another card.*] Enough.

Ficsur. [*Laying out his own cards.*] Twenty-one. [*He shuffles rapidly.*]

Liliom. [*Moves excitedly nearer to* Ficsur.] Well, then, double or nothing.

Ficsur. [*Dealing.*] Double or nothing.

Liliom. [*Gets a card.*] Enough.

Ficsur. [*Laying out his own cards.*] Twenty-one. [*Shuffles rapidly again.*]

Liliom. [*In alarm.*] You're not—cheating?

Ficsur. Me? Do I look like a cheat? [*Deals the cards again.*]

Liliom. [*Glances nervously over his shoulder.*] A thousand.

Ficsur. [*Nonchalantly.*] Kronen?

Liliom. Kronen. [*He gets a card.*] Another one. [*Gets another card.*] Over again! [*Like an inexperienced gambler who is losing heavily,* Liliom *is very nervous. He plays dazedly, wildly, irrationally. From now on it is apparent that his only thought is to win his money back.*]

Ficsur. That makes twelve hundred you owe.

Liliom. Double or nothing. [*He gets a card. He is greatly excited.*] Another one. [*Gets another card.*] Another. [*Throws down three cards.*]

Ficsur. [*Bends over and adds up the sum on the ground.*] Ten—fourteen—twenty-three—— You owe two thousand, four hundred.

Liliom. Now what?

Ficsur. [*Takes a card out of the deck and gives it to him.*] Here's the red ace. You can play double or nothing again.

Liliom. [*Eagerly.*] Good. [*Gets another card.*] Enough.

Ficsur. [*Turns up his own cards.*] Nineteen.

Liliom. You win again. [*Almost imploring.*] Give me an ace again. Give me the green one. [*Takes a card.*] Double or nothing.

Ficsur. Not any more.

Liliom. Why not?

Ficsur. Because if you lose you won't be able to pay. Double would be nine thousand six hundred. And you've only got eight thousand altogether.

Liliom. [*Greatly excited.*] That—that—I call that a dirty trick!

Ficsur. Three thousand, two hundred. That's all you can put up.

Liliom. [*Eagerly.*] All right, then—three thousand, two hundred. [Ficsur *deals him a card.*] Enough.

Ficsur. I've got an ace myself. Now we'll have to take our time and squeeze 'em. [Liliom *pushes closer to him as he takes up his cards and slowly, intently unfolds them.*] Twenty-one. [*He quickly puts the cards in his pocket. There is a pause.*]

Liliom. Now—now—I'll tell you now—you're a crook, a low-down——

[*Now* Linzman *enters at right. He is a strong, robust, red-bearded Jew about 40 years of age. At his side he carries a leather bag slung by a strap from his shoulder.* Ficsur *coughs warningly,*

moves to the right between LINZMAN *and the embankment, pauses just behind* LINZMAN *and follows him.* LILIOM *stands bewildered a few paces to the left of the railroad ties. He finds himself facing* LINZMAN.]

Liliom. [*Trembling in every limb.*] Good evening. Excuse me, sir, can you tell me the time?

[FICSUR *springs silently at* LINZMAN, *the little knife in his right hand. But* LINZMAN *catches* FICSUR'S *right hand with his own left and forces* FICSUR *to his knees. Simultaneously* LINZMAN *thrusts his right hand into his coat pocket and produces a revolver which he points at* LILIOM'S breast. LILIOM *is standing two paces away from the revolver. There is a long pause.*]

Linzman. [*In a low, even voice.*] It is twenty-five minutes past six. [*Pauses, looks ironically down at* FICSUR.] It's lucky I grabbed the hand with the knife instead of the other one. [*Pauses again, looks appraisingly from one to the other.*] Two fine birds! [*To* FICSUR.] I should live so—Rothschild has more luck than you. [*To* LILIOM.] I'd advise you to keep nice and quiet. If you make one move, you'll get two bullets in you. Just look into the barrel. You'll see some little things in there made of lead.

Ficsur. Let me go. I didn't do anything.

Linzman. [*Mockingly shakes the hand which still holds the knife.*] And this? What do you call this? Oh, yes, I know. You thought I had an apple in my pocket, and you wanted to peel it. That's it. Forgive me for my error. I beg your pardon, sir.

Liliom. But I—I——

Linzman. Yes, my son, I know. It's so simple. You only asked what time it is. Well, it's twenty-five minutes after six.

Ficsur. Let us go, honorable sir. We didn't do anything to you.

Linzman. In the first place, my son, I'm not an honorable sir. In the second place, for the same money, you could have said Your Excellency. But in the third place you'll find it very hard to beg off by flattering me.

Liliom. But I—*I* really didn't do anything to you.

Linzman. Look behind you, my boy. Don't be afraid. Look behind you, but don't run away or I'll have to shoot you down. [LILIOM *turns his head slowly around.*] Who's coming up there?

Liliom. [*Looking at* LINZMAN.] Policemen.

Linzman. [*To* FICSUR.] You hold still, or—— [*To* LILIOM *teasingly.*] How many policemen are there?

Liliom. [*His eyes cast down.*] Two.

Linzman. And what are the policemen sitting on?

Liliom. Horses.

Linzman. And which can run faster, a horse or a man?

Liliom. A horse.

Linzman. There, you see. It would be hard to get away now. [*Laughs.*] I never saw such an unlucky pair of highway robbers. I can't imagine worse luck. Just today I had to put a pistol in my pocket. And even if I hadn't—old Linzman is a match for four like you. But even that isn't all. Did you happen to notice, you oxen, what direction I came from? From the factory, didn't I? When I *went* there I had a nice bit of money with me. Sixteen thousand crowns! But now—not a heller. [*Calls off left.*] Hey, come quicker, will you? This fellow is pulling pretty strong. [FICSUR *frees himself with a mighty wrench and darts rapidly off. As* LINZMAN *aims his pistol at the vanishing* FICSUR, LILIOM *runs up the steps to the embankment.* LINZMAN *hesitates, perceives that* LILIOM *is the better target, points the pistol at him.*] Stop, or I'll shoot! [*Calls off left to the* POLICEMEN.] Why don't you come down off your horses? [*His pistol is leveled at* LILIOM, *who stands on the embankment, facing the audience. From the left on the embankment, a* POLICEMAN *appears, revolver in hand.*]

First Policeman. Stop!

Linzman. Well, my boy, do you still want to know what time it is? From ten to twelve years in prison!

Liliom. You won't get me! [LINZMAN *laughs derisively.* LILIOM *is now three or four paces from the* POLICEMAN *and equally distant from* LINZMAN. *His face is uplifted to the sky. He bursts into laughter, half*

defiant, half self-pitying, and takes the kitchen knife from under his coat.] Julie! ——[*The ring of farewell is in the word. He turns sideways, thrusts the knife deep in his breast, sways, falls and rolls down the far side of the embankment. There is a long pause. From the left up on the embankment come the* TWO POLICEMEN.]

Linzman. What's the matter? [*The* FIRST POLICEMAN *comes along the embankment as far as the steps, looks down in the opposite side, then climbs down at about the spot where* LILIOM *disappeared.* LINZMAN *and the other* POLICEMAN *mount the embankment and look down on him.*] Stabbed himself?

Voice of First Policeman. Yes—and he seems to have made a thorough job of it.

Linzman. [*Excitedly to the* SECOND POLICEMAN.] I'll go and telephone to the hospital. [*He runs down the steps and goes out at left.*]

Second Policeman. Go to Eisler's grocery store and telephone to the factory from there. They've a doctor there, too. [*Calling down to the other* POLICEMAN.] I'm going to tie up the horses. [*Comes down the steps and exits at left. The stage is empty. There is a pause. The little red signal lamp is lit.*]

Voice of First Policeman. Hey, Stephan!

Voice of Second Policeman. What?

Voice of First Policeman. Shall I pull the knife out of his chest?

Voice of Second Policeman. Better not, or he may bleed to death. [*There is a pause.*]

Voice of First Policeman. Stephan!

Voice of Second Policeman. Yes.

Voice of First Policeman. Lot of mosquitoes around here.

Voice of Second Policeman. Yes.

Voice of First Policeman. Got a cigar?

Voice of Second Policeman. No. [*There is a pause. The* FIRST POLICEMAN *appears over the opposite side of the embankment.*]

First Policeman. A lot of good the new pay-schedule's done us—made things worse than they used to be—we *get* more but we *have* less than we ever had. If the Government could be made to realize that. It's a thankless job at best. You work hard year after year, you get gray in the service, and slowly you die—yes.

Second Policeman. That's right.

First Policeman. Yes. [*In the distance is heard the bell of the signal tower.*]

SCENE FIVE

SCENE—*The photographic "studio" a half hour later that same evening.* MOTHER HOLLUNDER, *her son,* MARIE *and* WOLF *stand in a group back right, their heads together.* JULIE *stands apart from them, a few paces to the left.*

Young Hollunder. [*Who has just come in, tells his story excitedly.*] They're bringing him now. Two workmen from the factory are carrying him on a stretcher.

Wolf. Where is the doctor?

Young Hollunder. A policeman telephoned to headquarters. The police-surgeon ought to be here any minute.

Marie. Maybe they'll pull him through after all.

Young Hollunder. He stabbed himself too deep in his chest. But he's still breathing. He can still talk, too, but very faintly. At first he lay there unconscious, but when they put him on the stretcher he came to.

Wolf. That was from the shaking.

Marie. We'd better make room. [*They make room. Two workmen carry in* LILIOM *on a stretcher which has four legs and stands about as high as a bed. They put the stretcher at left directly in front of the sofa, so that the head is at right and the foot at left. Then they unobtrusively join the group at the door. Later, they go out.* JULIE *is standing at the side of the stretcher, where, without moving, she can see* LILIOM'S *face. The others crowd emotionally together near the door.* THE FIRST POLICEMAN *enters.*]

First Policeman. Are you his wife?

Julie. Yes.

First Policeman. The doctor at the factory who bandaged him up forbade us to take him to the hospital.—Dangerous to move him that far. What he needs now is rest. Just let him be until the police-surgeon comes. [*To the group near the door.*] He's not to be disturbed. [*They make way for him. He exits. There is a pause.*]

Wolf. [*Gently urging the others out.*] Please—it's best if we all get out of here. We'll only be in the way.

Marie. [*To* JULIE.] Julie, what do you

think? [JULIE *looks at her without answering.*] Julie, can I do anything to help? [JULIE *does not answer.*] We'll be just outside on the bench if you want us. [MOTHER HOLLUNDER *and her son have gone out when first requested. Now* MARIE *and* WOLF *exit, too.* JULIE *sits on the edge of the stretcher and looks at* LILIOM. *He stretches his hand out to her. She clasps it. It is not quite dark yet. Both of them can still be plainly seen.*]

Liliom. [*Raises himself with difficulty; speaks lightly at first, but later soberly, defiantly.*] Little—Julie—there's something—I want to tell you—like when you go to a restaurant—and you've finished eating—and it's time—to pay—then you have to count up everything—everything you owe—well—I beat you—not because I was mad at you—no—only because I can't bear to see anyone crying. You always cried—on my account—and, well, you see,—I never learned a trade—what kind of a caretaker would I make? But anyhow—I wasn't going back to the carousel to fool with the girls. No, I spit on them all—understand?

Julie. Yes.

Liliom. And—as for Hollinger—he's good enough—Mrs. Muskat can get along all right with him. The jokes he tells are mine—and the people laugh when he tells them—but I don't care.—I didn't give you anything—no home—not even the food you ate—but you don't understand.—It's true I'm not much good—but I couldn't be a caretaker—and so I thought maybe it would be better over there—in America—do you see?

Julie. Yes.

Liliom. I'm not asking—forgiveness—I don't do that—I don't. Tell the baby—if you like.

Julie. Yes.

Liliom. Tell the baby—I wasn't much good—but tell him—if you ever talk about me—tell him—I thought—perhaps—over in America—but that's no affair of yours. I'm not asking forgiveness. For my part the police can come now.—If it's a boy—if it's a girl.—Perhaps I'll see the Lord God today.—Do you think I'll see Him?

Julie. Yes.

Liliom. I'm not afraid—of the police Up There—if they'll only let me come up in front of the Lord God Himself—not like down here where an officer stops you at the door. If the carpenter asks you—yes—be his wife—marry him. And the child—tell him he's his father.—He'll believe you—won't he?

Julie. Yes.

Liliom. When I beat you—I was right.—You mustn't always think—you mustn't always be right.—Liliom can be right once, too.—It's all the same to me who was right.—It's so dumb. Nobody's right—but they all think they are right.—A lot they know!

Julie. Yes.

Liliom. Julie—come—hold my hand tight.

Julie. I'm holding it tight—all the time.

Liliom. Tighter, still tighter—I'm going —— [*Pauses.*] Julie ——

Julie. Good-bye. [LILIOM *sinks slowly back and dies.* JULIE *frees her hand. The* DOCTOR *enters with the* FIRST POLICEMAN.]

Doctor. Good evening. His wife?

Julie. Yes, sir. [*Behind the* DOCTOR *and* POLICEMAN *enter* MARIE, WOLF, MOTHER HOLLUNDER, YOUNG HOLLUNDER *and* MRS. MUSKAT. *They remain respectfully at the doorway. The* DOCTOR *bends over* LILIOM *and examines him.*]

Doctor. A light, if you please. [JULIE *fetches a burning candle from the dark room. The* DOCTOR *examines* LILIOM *briefly in the candle-light, then turns suddenly away.*] Have you pen and ink?

Wolf. [*Proffering a pen.*] A fountain-pen—American ——

Doctor. [*Takes a printed form from his pocket; speaks as he writes out the death-certificate at the little table.*] My poor woman, your husband is dead—there's nothing to be done for him—the good God will help him now—I'll leave this certificate with you. You will give it to the people from the hospital when they come—I'll arrange for the body to be removed at once. [*Rises.*] Please give me a towel and soap.

Policeman. I've got them for you out here, sir. [*Points to door at back.*]

Doctor. God be with you, my good woman.

Julie. Thank you, sir. [*The* DOCTOR *and* POLICEMAN *exit. The others slowly draw nearer.*]

Marie. Poor Julie. May he rest in peace, poor man, but as for you—please don't be

angry with me for saying it—but you're better off this way.

Mother Hollunder. He is better off, the poor fellow, and so are you.

Marie. Much better, Julie . . . you are young . . . and one of these days some good man will come along. Am I right?

Wolf. She's right.

Marie. Julie, tell me, am I right?

Julie. You are right, dear; you are very good.

Young Hollunder. There's a good man—the carpenter. Oh, I can speak of it now. He comes here every day on some excuse or other—and he never fails to ask for you.

Marie. A widower—with two children.

Mother Hollunder. He's better off, poor fellow—and so are you. He was a bad man.

Marie. He wasn't good-hearted. Was he, Wolf?

Wolf. No, I must say, he really wasn't. No, Liliom wasn't a good man. A good man doesn't strike a woman.

Marie. Am I right? Tell me, Julie, am I right?

Julie. You are right, dear.

Young Hollunder. It's really a good thing for her it happened.

Mother Hollunder. He's better off—and so is she.

Wolf. Now you have your freedom again. How old are you?

Julie. Eighteen.

Wolf. Eighteen. A mere child! Am I right?

Julie. You are right, Wolf. You are kind.

Young Hollunder. Lucky for you it happened, isn't it?

Julie. Yes.

Young Hollunder. All you had before was bad luck. If it weren't for my mother you wouldn't have had a roof over your head or a bite to eat—and now Autumn's coming and Winter. You couldn't have lived in this shack in the Winter time, could you?

Marie. Certainly not! You'd have frozen like the birds in the fields. Am I right, Julie?

Julie. Yes, Marie.

Marie. A year from now you will have forgotten all about him, won't you?

Julie. You are right, Marie.

Wolf. If you need anything, count on us. We'll go now. But tomorrow morning we'll be back. Come, Marie. God be with you. [*Offers* JULIE *his hand.*]

Julie. God be with you.

Marie. [*Embraces* JULIE, *weeping.*] It's the best thing that could have happened to you, Julie, the best thing.

Julie. Don't cry, Marie. [MARIE *and* WOLF *exit.*]

Mother Hollunder. I'll make a little black coffee. You haven't had a thing to eat today. Then you'll come home with us. [MOTHER HOLLUNDER *and her son exit.* MRS. MUSKAT *comes over to* JULIE.]

Mrs. Muskat. Would you mind if I—looked at him?

Julie. He used to work for you.

Mrs. Muskat. [*Contemplates the body; turns to* JULIE.] Won't you make up with me?

Julie. I wasn't angry with you.

Mrs. Muskat. But you were. Let's make it up.

Julie. [*Raising her voice eagerly, almost triumphantly.*] I've nothing to make up with *you.*

Mrs. Muskat. But I have with you. Everyone says hard things against the poor dead boy—except us two. You don't say he was bad.

Julie. [*Raising her voice yet higher, this time on a defiant, wholly triumphant note.*] Yes, I *do.*

Mrs. Muskat. I understand, my child. But he beat me, too. What does that matter? I've forgotten it.

Julie. [*From now on answers her coldly, drily, without looking at her.*] That's your own affair.

Mrs. Muskat. If I can help you in any way ——

Julie. There's nothing I need.

Mrs. Muskat. I still owe him two kronen, back pay.

Julie. You should have paid him.

Mrs. Muskat. Now that the poor fellow is dead I thought perhaps it would be the same if I paid you.

Julie. I've nothing to do with it.

Mrs. Muskat. All right. Please don't think I'm trying to force myself on you. I stayed because we two are the only ones on earth who loved him. That's why I thought we ought to stick together.

Julie. No, thank you.

Mrs. Muskat. Then you couldn't have loved him as I did.

Julie. No.

Mrs. Muskat. I loved him better.

Julie. Yes.

Mrs. Muskat. Good-bye.

Julie. Good-bye. [MRS. MUSKAT *exits.* JULIE *puts the candle on the table near* LILIOM'S *head, sits on the edge of the stretcher, looks into the dead man's face and caresses it tenderly.*] Sleep, Liliom, sleep—it's no business of hers—I never even told you—but now I'll tell you—now I'll tell you—you bad, quick-tempered, rough, unhappy, wicked—*dear* boy—sleep peacefully, Liliom—they can't understand how I feel—I can't even explain to you—not even to you—how I feel—you'd only laugh at me—but you can't hear me any more. [*Between tender motherliness and reproach, yet with great love in her voice.*] It was wicked of you to beat me—on the breast and on the head and face—but you're gone now.—You treated me badly—that was wicked of you—but sleep peacefully, Liliom—you bad, bad boy, you—I love you—I never told you before—I was ashamed—but now I've told you—I love you. Liliom—sleep—my boy—sleep. [*She rises, gets a Bible, sits down near the candle and reads softly to herself, so that, not the words, but an inarticulate murmur is heard. The* CARPENTER *enters at back.*]

Carpenter. [*Stands near the door; in the dimness of the room he can scarcely be seen.*] Miss Julie——

Julie. [*Without alarm.*] Who is that?

Carpenter. [*Very slowly.*] The carpenter.

Julie. What does the carpenter want?

Carpenter. Can I be of help to you in any way? Shall I stay here with you?

Julie. [*Gratefully, but firmly.*] Don't stay, carpenter.

Carpenter. Shall I come back tomorrow?

Julie. Not tomorrow, either.

Carpenter. Don't be offended, Miss Julie, but I'd like to know—you see, I'm not a young man any more—I have two children—and if I'm to come back any more—I'd like to know—if there's any use——

Julie. No use, carpenter.

Carpenter. [*As he exits.*] God be with you. [JULIE *resumes her reading.* FICSUR *enters, slinks furtively sideways to the stretcher, looks at* LILIOM, *shakes his head.* JULIE *looks up from her reading.* FICSUR *takes fright, slinks away from the stretcher, sits down at right, biting his nails.* JULIE *rises.* FICSUR *rises, too, and looks at her half fearfully. With her piercing glance upon him he slinks to the doorway at back, where he pauses and speaks.*]

Ficsur. The old woman asked me to tell you that coffee is ready, and you are to come in. [JULIE *goes to the kitchen door.* FICSUR *withdraws until she has closed the door behind her. Then he reappears in the doorway, stands on tiptoes, looks at* LILIOM, *then exits. Now the body lies alone. After a brief silence music is heard, distant at first, but gradually coming nearer. It is very much like the music of the carousel, but slower, graver, more exalted. The melody, too, is the same, yet the tempo is altered and contrapuntal measures of the thieves' song are intertwined in it. Two men in black, with heavy sticks, soft black hats and black gloves, appear in the doorway at back and stride slowly into the room. Their faces are beardless, marble white, grave and benign. One stops in front of the stretcher, the other a pace to the right. From above a dim violet light illuminates their faces.*]

The First. [*To* LILIOM.] Rise and come with us.

The Second. [*Politely.*] You're under arrest.

The First. [*Somewhat louder, but always in a gentle, low, resonant voice.*] Do you hear? Rise. Don't you hear?

The Second. We are the police.

The First. [*Bends down, touches* LILIOM'S *shoulder.*] Get up and come with us. [LILIOM *slowly sits up.*]

The Second. Come along.

The First. [*Paternally.*] These people suppose that when they die all their difficulties are solved for them.

The Second. [*Raising his voice sternly.*] That simply by thrusting a knife in your heart and making it stop beating you can leave your wife behind with a child in her womb——

The First. It is not as simple as that.

The Second. Such things are not settled so easily.

The First. Come along. You will have to give an account of yourself. [*As both bow their heads, he continues softly.*] We are

God's police. [*An expression of glad relief lights upon* LILIOM'S *face. He rises from the stretcher.*] Come.

The Second. You mortals don't get off quite as easy as that.

The First. [*Softly.*] Come. [LILIOM *starts to walk ahead of them, then stops and looks at them.*] The end is not as abrupt as that. Your name is still spoken. Your face is still remembered. And what you said, and what you did, and what you failed to do—these are still remembered. Remembered, too, are the manner of your glance, the ring of your voice, the clasp of your hand and how your step sounded—as long as one is left who remembers you, so long is the matter unended. Before the end there is much to be undone. Until you are quite forgotten, my son, you will not be finished with the earth—even though you *are* dead.

The Second. [*Very gently.*] Come. [*The music begins again. All three exit at back,* LILIOM *leading, the others following. The stage is empty and quite dark save for the candle which burns by the stretcher, on which, in the shadows, the covers are so arranged that one cannot quite be sure that a body is not still lying. The music dies out in the distance as if it had followed* LILIOM *and the two* POLICEMEN. *The candle flickers and goes out. There is a brief interval of silence and total darkness before.*]

SCENE SIX

SCENE—*In the Beyond. A whitewashed courtroom. There is a green-topped table; behind it a bench. Back center is a door with a bell over it. Next to this door is a window through which can be seen a vista of rose-tinted clouds.*

Down right there is a grated iron door. Down left another door.

Two men are on the bench when the curtain rises. One is richly, the other poorly dressed.

From a great distance is heard a fanfare of trumpets playing the refrain of the thieves' song in slow, altered tempo.

Passing the window at back appear LILIOM *and the two* POLICEMEN. *The bell rings.*

An old guard enters at right. He is bald and has a long white beard. He wears the conventional police uniform.

He goes to the door at back, opens it, exchanges silent greetings with the two policemen and closes the door again.

LILIOM *looks wonderingly around.*

The First. [*To the old guard.*] Announce us. [*The guard exits at left.*]

Liliom. Is this it?

The Second. Yes, my son.

Liliom. This is the police court?

The Second. Yes, my son. The part for suicide cases.

Liliom. What happens here?

The First. Here justice is done. Sit down. [LILIOM *sits next to the two men. The two* POLICEMEN *stand silent near the table.*]

The Richly Dressed Man. [*Whispers.*] Suicide, too?

Liliom. Yes.

The Richly Dressed Man. [*Points to the* POORLY DRESSED MAN.] So's he. [*Introducing himself.*] My name is Reich.

The Poorly Dressed Man. [*Whispers, too.*] My name is Stephan Kadar.

[LILIOM *only looks at them.*]

The Poorly Dressed Man. And you? What's your name?

Liliom. None of your business. [*Both move a bit away from him.*]

The Poorly Dressed Man. I did it by jumping out of a window.

The Richly Dressed Man. I did it with a pistol—and you?

Liliom. With a knife. [*They move a bit further away from him.*]

The Richly Dressed Man. A pistol is cleaner.

Liliom. If I had the price of a pistol——

The Second. Silence!

[THE POLICE MAGISTRATE *enters. He has a long white beard, is bald, but only in profile can be seen on his head a single tuft of snow-white hair.* THE GUARD *reënters behind him and sits on the bench with the dead men. As* THE MAGISTRATE *enters, all rise, except* LILIOM, *who remains surlily seated. When* THE MAGISTRATE *sits down, so do the others.*]

The Guard. Yesterday's cases, your honor. The numbers are entered in the docket.

The Magistrate. Number 16,472.

The First. [*Looks in his notebook,*

beckons THE RICHLY DRESSED MAN.] Stand up, please. [THE RICHLY DRESSED MAN *rises.*]

The Magistrate. Your name?

The Richly Dressed Man. Doctor Reich.

The Magistrate. Age?

The Richly Dressed Man. Forty-two, married, Jew.

The Magistrate. [*With a gesture of dismissal.*] Religion does not interest us here—why did you kill yourself?

The Richly Dressed Man. On account of debts.

The Magistrate. What good did you do on earth?

The Richly Dressed Man. I was a lawyer——

The Magistrate. [*Coughs significantly.*] Yes—we'll discuss that later. For the present I shall only ask you: Would you like to go back to earth once more before sunrise? I advise you that you have the right to go if you choose. Do you understand?

The Richly Dressed Man. Yes, sir.

The Magistrate. He who takes his life is apt, in his haste and his excitement, to forget something. Is there anything important down there you have left undone? Something to tell someone? Something to undo?

The Richly Dressed Man. My debts——

The Magistrate. They do not matter here. Here we are concerned only with the affairs of the soul.

The Richly Dressed Man. Then—if you please—when I left—the house—my youngest son, Oscar—was asleep. I didn't trust myself to wake him—and bid him goodbye. I would have liked—to kiss him goodbye.

The Magistrate. [*To the* SECOND.] You will take Dr. Reich back and let him kiss his son Oscar.

The Second. Come with me, please.

The Richly Dressed Man. [*To* THE MAGISTRATE.] I thank you. [*He bows and exits at back with* THE SECOND.]

The Magistrate. [*After making an entry in the docket.*] Number 16,473.

The First. [*Looks in his notebook, then beckons* LILIOM.] Stand up.

Liliom. You said *please* to him. [*He rises.*]

The Magistrate. Your name?

Liliom. Liliom.

The Magistrate. Isn't that your nickname?

Liliom. Yes.

The Magistrate. What is your right name?

Liliom. Andreas.

The Magistrate. And your last name?

Liliom. Zavoczki—after my mother.

The Magistrate. Your age?

Liliom. Twenty-four.

The Magistrate. What good did *you* do on earth? [LILIOM *is silent.*] Why did you take your life? [LILIOM *does not answer.* THE MAGISTRATE *addresses* THE FIRST.] Take that knife away from him. [THE FIRST *does so.*] It will be returned to you, if you go back to earth.

Liliom. Do I go back to earth again?

The Magistrate. Just answer my questions.

Liliom. I wasn't answering then, I was asking if——

The Magistrate. You don't ask questions here. You only answer. Only answer, Andreas Zavoczki! I ask you whether there is anything on earth you neglected to accomplish? Anything down there you would like to do?

Liliom. Yes.

The Magistrate. What is it?

Liliom. I'd like to break Ficsur's head for him.

The Magistrate. Punishment is our office. Is there nothing else on earth you'd like to do?

Liliom. I don't know—I guess, as long as I'm here, I'll not go back.

The Magistrate. [*To* THE FIRST.] Note that. He waives his right. [LILIOM starts *back to the bench.*] Stay where you are. You are aware that you left your wife without food or shelter?

Liliom. Yes.

The Magistrate. Don't you regret it?

Liliom. No.

The Magistrate. You are aware that your wife is pregnant, and that in six months a child will be born?

Liliom. I know.

The Magistrate. And that the child, too, will be without food or shelter? Do you regret that?

Liliom. As long as I won't be there, what's it got to do with me?

The Magistrate. Don't try to deceive us,

Andreas Zavoczki. We see through you as through a pane of glass.

Liliom. If you see so much, what do you want to ask me for? Why don't you let me rest—in peace?

The Magistrate. First you must earn your rest.

Liliom. I want—only—to sleep.

The Magistrate. Your obstinacy won't help you. Here patience is endless as time. We can wait.

Liliom. Can I ask something—I'd like to know—if Your Honor will tell me—whether the baby will be a boy or a girl.

The Magistrate. You shall see that for yourself.

Liliom. [*Excitedly.*] I'll see the baby?

The Magistrate. When you do it won't be a baby any more. But we haven't reached that question yet.

Liliom. I'll see it?

The Magistrate. Again I ask you: Do you not regret that you deserted your wife and child; that you were a bad husband, a bad father?

Liliom. A bad husband?

The Magistrate. Yes.

Liliom And a bad father?

The Magistrate. That, too.

Liliom. I couldn't get work—and I couldn't bear to see Julie—all the time—all the time——

The Magistrate. Weeping! Why are you ashamed to say it? You couldn't bear to see her weeping. Why are you afraid of that word? And why are you ashamed that you loved her?

Liliom. [*Shrugs his shoulders.*] Who's ashamed? But I couldn't bear to see her—and that's why I was bad to her. You see, it wouldn't do to go back to the carousel—and Ficsur came along with his talk about—that other thing—and all of a sudden it happened, I don't know how. The police and the Jew with the pistol—and there I stood—and I'd lost the money playing cards—and I didn't want to be put in prison. [*Demanding justification.*] Maybe I was wrong not to go out and steal when there was nothing to eat in the house? Should I have gone out to steal for Julie?

The Magistrate. [*Emphatically.*] Yes.

Liliom. [*After an astounded pause.*] The police down there never said that.

The Magistrate. You beat that poor, frail girl; you beat her because she loved you. How could you do that?

Liliom. We argued with each other—she said this and I said that—and because she was right I couldn't answer her—and I got mad—and the anger rose up in me—until it reached here [*points to his throat*]—and then I beat her.

The Magistrate. Are you sorry?

Liliom. [*Shakes his head, but cannot utter the word "no"; continues softly.*] When I touched her slender throat—then—if you like—you might say—— [*Falters, looks embarrassed at* THE MAGISTRATE.]

The Magistrate. [*Confidently expectant.*] Are you sorry?

Liliom. [*With a stare.*] I'm not sorry for anything.

The Magistrate. Liliom, Liliom, it will be difficult to help you.

Liliom. I'm not asking any help.

The Magistrate. You were offered employment as a caretaker on Arader Street. [*To* THE FIRST.] Where is that entered?

The First. In the small docket. [*Hands him the open book.* THE MAGISTRATE *looks in it.*]

The Magistrate. Rooms, kitchen, quarterly wages, the privilege of keeping poultry. Why didn't you accept it?

Liliom. I'm not a caretaker. I'm no good at caretaking. To be a caretaker—you have to be a caretaker——

The Magistrate. If I said to you now: Liliom, go back on your stretcher. Tomorrow morning you will arise alive and well again. Would you be a caretaker then?

Liliom. No.

The Magistrate. Why not?

Liliom. Because—because that's just why I died.

The Magistrate. That is not true, my son. You died because you loved little Julie and the child she is bearing under her heart.

Liliom. No.

The Magistrate. Look me in the eye.

Liliom. [*Looks him in the eye.*] No.

The Magistrate. [*Stroking his beard.*] Liliom, Liliom, if it were not for our Heavenly patience—— Go back to your seat. Number 16,474.

The First. [*Looks in his notebook.*] Stephan Kadar. [THE POORLY DRESSED MAN *rises.*]

The Magistrate. You came out today?

The Poorly Dressed Man. Today.

The Magistrate. [*Indicating the crimson sea of clouds.*] How long were you in there?

The Poorly Dressed Man. Thirteen years.

The Magistrate. Officer, you went to earth with him?

The First. Yes, sir.

The Magistrate. Stephan Kadar, after thirteen years of purification by fire you returned to earth to give proof that your soul had been burned clean. What good deed did you perform?

The Poorly Dressed Man. When I came to the village and looked in the window of our cottage I saw my poor little orphans sleeping peacefully. But it was raining and the rain beat into the room through a hole in the roof. So I went and fixed the roof so it wouldn't rain in any more. My hammering woke them up and they were afraid. But their mother came in to them and comforted them. She said to them: "Don't cry! It's your poor, dear father hammering up there. He's come back from the other world to fix the roof for us."

The Magistrate. Officer?

The First. That's what happened.

The Magistrate. Stephan Kadar, you have done a good deed. What you did will be written in books to gladden the hearts of children who read them. [*Indicates the door at left.*] The door is open to you. The eternal light awaits you. [THE FIRST *escorts* THE POORLY DRESSED MAN *out at left with great deference.*] Liliom! [LILIOM *rises.*] You have heard?

Liliom. Yes.

The Magistrate. When this man first appeared before us he was as stubborn as you. But now he has purified himself and withstood the test. He has done a good deed.

Liliom. What's he done, anyhow? Any roofer can fix a roof. It's much harder to be a barker in an amusement park.

The Magistrate. Liliom, you shall remain for sixteen years in the crimson fire until your child is full grown. By that time your pride and your stubbornness will have been burnt out of you. And when your daughter ——

Liliom. My daughter!

The Magistrate. When your daughter has reached the age of sixteen ——[LILIOM *bows his head, covers his eyes with his hands, and to keep from weeping laughs defiantly, sadly.*]

The Magistrate. When your daughter has reached the age of sixteen you will be sent for one day back to earth.

Liliom. Me?

The Magistrate. Yes—just as you may have read in the legends of how the dead reappear on earth for a time.

Liliom. I never believed them.

The Magistrate. Now you see they are true. You will go back to earth one day to show how far the purification of your soul has progressed.

Liliom. Then I must show that I can do —like when you apply for a job—as a coachman?

The Magistrate. Yes—it is a test.

Liliom. And will I be told what I have to do?

The Magistrate. No.

Liliom. How will I know, then?

The Magistrate. You must decide that for yourself. That's what you burn sixteen years for. And if you do something good, something splendid for your child, then ——

Liliom. [*Laughs sadly.*] Then? [*All stand up and bow their heads reverently. There is a pause.*] Then?

The Magistrate. Now I'll bid you farewell, Liliom. Sixteen years and a day shall pass before I see you again. When you have returned from earth you will come up before me again. Take heed and think well of some good deed to do for your child. On that will depend which door shall be opened to you up here. Now go, Liliom. [*He exits at left.* THE GUARD *stands at attention. There is a pause.*]

The First. [*Approaches* LILIOM.] Come along, my son. [*He goes to the door at right; pulls open the bolt and waits.*]

Liliom. [*To the old* GUARD, *softly.*] Say, officer.

The Guard. What do you want?

Liliom. Please—can I get—have you got ——?

The Guard. What?

Liliom. [*Whispers.*] A cigarette?

[*The old* GUARD *stares at him, goes a few paces to the left, shakes his head disapprovingly. Then his expression softens. He takes a cigarette from his pocket and, crossing to* LILIOM—*who has gone*

over to the door at right—gives him the cigarette. The First throws open the door. An intense rose-colored light streams in. The glow of it is so strong that it blinds LILIOM *and he takes a step backward and bows his head and covers his eyes with his hand before he steps forward into the light.*]

SCENE SEVEN

SCENE—*Sixteen years later. A small, tumble-down house on a bare, unenclosed plot of ground. Before the house is a tiny garden enclosed by a hip-high hedge.*

At back a wooden fence crosses the stage; in the center of it is a door large enough to admit a wagon. Beyond the fence is a view of a suburban street which blends into a broad vista of tilled fields.

It is a bright Sunday in Spring.

In the garden a table for two is laid.

JULIE, *her daughter* LOUISE, WOLF *and* MARIE *are discovered in the garden.* WOLF *is prosperously dressed,* MARIE *somewhat elaborately, with a huge hat.*

Julie. You could stay for lunch.

Marie. Impossible, dear. Since he became the proprietor of the Café Sorrento, Wolf simply has to be there all the time.

Julie. But you needn't stay there all day, too.

Marie. Oh, yes. I sit near the cashier's cage, read the papers, keep an eye on the waiters and drink in the bustle and excitement of the great city.

Julie. And what about the children?

Marie. You know what modern families are like. Parents scarcely ever see their children these days. The four girls are with their governess, the three boys with their tutor.

Louise. Auntie, dear, do stay and eat with us.

Marie. [*Importantly.*] Impossible today, dear child, impossible. Perhaps some other time. Come, Mr. Beifeld.

Julie. Since when do you call your husband mister?

Wolf. I'd rather she did, dear lady. When we used to be very familiar we quarreled all the time. Now we are formal with each other and get along like society folk. I kiss your hand, dear lady.

Julie. Good-bye, Wolf.

Marie. Adieu, my dear. [*They embrace.*] Adieu, my dear child.

Louise. Good-bye, Aunt Marie. Good-bye, Uncle Wolf.

[WOLF *and* MARIE *exit.*]

Julie. You can get the soup now, Louise dear.

[LOUISE *goes into the house and reënters with the soup. They sit at the table.*]

Louise. Mother, is it true we're not going to work at the jute factory any more?

Julie. Yes, dear.

Louise. Where then?

Julie. Uncle Wolf has gotten us a place in a big establishment where they make all kinds of fittings for cafés. We're to make big curtains, you know, the kind they hang in the windows, with lettering on them.

Louise. It'll be nicer there than at the jute factory.

Julie. Yes, dear. The work isn't as dirty and pays better, too. A poor widow like your mother is lucky to get it.

[*They eat.* LILIOM *and the two* HEAVENLY POLICEMEN *appear in the big doorway at back. The* POLICEMEN *pass slowly by.* LILIOM *stands there alone a moment, then comes slowly down and pauses at the opening of the hedge. He is dressed as he was on the day of his death. He is very pale, but otherwise unaltered.* JULIE, *at the table, has her back to him.* LOUISE *sits facing the audience.*]

Liliom. Good day.

Louise. Good day.

Julie. Another beggar! What is it you want, my poor man?

Liliom. Nothing.

Julie. We have no money to give, but if you care for a plate of soup—— LOUISE *goes into the house.*] Have you come far today?

Liliom. Yes—very far.

Julie. Are you tired?

Liliom. Very tired.

Julie. Over there at the gate is a stone.

Sit down and rest. My daughter is bringing you the soup.

[LOUISE *comes out of the house.*]

Liliom. Is that your daughter?

Julie. Yes.

Liliom. [*To* LOUISE.] You are the daughter?

Louise. Yes, sir.

Liliom. A fine, healthy girl. [*Takes the soup plate from her with one hand, while with the other he touches her arm.* LOUISE *draws back quickly.*]

Louise. [*Crosses to* JULIE.] Mother!

Julie. What, my child?

Louise. The man tried to take me by the arm.

Julie. Nonsense! You only imagined it, dear. The poor, hungry man has other things to think about than fooling with young girls. Sit down and eat your soup.

[*They eat.*]

Liliom. [*Eats, too, but keeps looking at them.*] You work at the factory, eh?

Julie. Yes.

Liliom. Your daughter, too?

Louise. Yes.

Liliom. And your husband?

Julie. [*After a pause.*] I have no husband. I'm a widow.

Liliom. A widow?

Julie. Yes.

Liliom. Your husband—I suppose he's been dead a long time. [JULIE *does not answer.*] I say—has your husband been dead a long time?

Julie. A long time.

Liliom. What did he die of?

[JULIE *is silent.*]

Louise. No one knows. He went to America to work and he died there—in the hospital. Poor father, I never knew him.

Liliom. He went to America?

Louise. Yes, before I was born.

Liliom. To America?

Julie. Why do you ask so many questions? Did you know him, perhaps?

Liliom. [*Puts the plate down.*] Heaven knows! I've known so many people. Maybe I knew him, too.

Julie. Well, if you knew him, leave him and us in peace with your questions. He went to America and died there. That's all there is to tell.

Liliom. All right. All right. Don't be angry with me. I didn't mean any harm.

[*There is a pause.*]

Louise. My father was a very handsome man.

Julie. Don't talk so much.

Louise. Did I say anything——?

Liliom. Surely the little orphan can say that about her father.

Louise. My father could juggle so beautifully with three ivory balls that people used to advise him to go on the stage.

Julie. Who told you that?

Louise. Uncle Wolf.

Liliom. Who is that?

Louise. Mr. Wolf Beifeld, who owns the Café Sorrento.

Liliom. The one who used to be a porter?

Julie. [*Astonished.*] Do you know him, too? It seems that you know all Budapest.

Liliom. Wolf Beifeld is a long way from being all Budapest. But I do know a lot of people. Why shouldn't I know Wolf Beifeld?

Louise. He was a friend of my father.

Julie. He was not his friend. No one was.

Liliom. You speak of your husband so sternly.

Julie. What's that to you? Doesn't it suit you? I can speak of my husband any way I like. It's nobody's business but mine.

Liliom. Certainly, certainly—it's your own business. [*Takes up his soup plate again. All three eat.*]

Louise. [*To* JULIE.] Perhaps he knew father, too.

Julie. Ask him, if you like.

Louise. [*Crosses to* LILIOM. *He stands up.*] Did you know my father? [LILIOM *nods.* LOUISE *addresses her mother.*] Yes, he knew him.

Julie. [*Rises.*] You knew Andreas Zavoczki?

Liliom. Liliom? Yes.

Louise. Was he really a very handsome man?

Liliom. I wouldn't exactly say handsome.

Louise. [*Confidently.*] But he was an awfully good man, wasn't he?

Liliom. He wasn't so good, either. As far as I know he was what they called a clown, a barker in a carousel.

Louise. [*Pleased.*] Did he tell funny jokes?

Liliom. Lots of 'em. And he sang funny songs, too.

Louise. In the carousel?

Liliom. Yes—but he was something of a bully, too. He'd fight anyone. He even hit your dear little mother.

Julie. That's a lie.

Liliom. It's true.

Julie. Aren't you ashamed to tell the child such awful things about her father? Get out of here, you shameless liar. Eats our soup and our bread and has the impudence to slander our dead!

Liliom. I didn't mean—I——

Julie. What right have you to tell lies to the child? Take that plate, Louise, and let him be on his way. If he wasn't such a hungry-looking beggar, I'd put him out myself.

[LOUISE *takes the plate out of his hand.*]

Liliom. So, he didn't hit you?

Julie. No, never. He was always good to me.

Louise. [*Whispers.*] Did he tell funny stories, too?

Liliom. Yes, and *such* funny ones.

Julie. Don't speak to him any more. In God's name, go.

Louise. In God's name.

[JULIE *resumes her seat at the table and eats.*]

Liliom. If you please, Miss—I have a pack of cards in my pocket. And if you like, I'll show you some tricks that'll make you split your sides laughing. [LOUISE *holds* LILIOM'S *plate in her left hand. With her right she reaches out and holds the garden gate shut.*] Let me in, just a little way, Miss, and I'll do the tricks for you.

Louise. Go, in God's name, and let us be. Why are you making those ugly faces?

Liliom. Don't chase me away, Miss; let me come in for just a minute—just for a minute—just long enough to let me show you something pretty, something wonderful. [*Opens the gate.*] Miss, I've something to give you.

[*Takes from his pocket a big red handkerchief in which is wrapped a glittering star from Heaven. He looks furtively about him to make sure that the Police are not watching.*]

Louise. What's that?

Liliom. Pst! A star!

[*With a gesture he indicates that he has stolen it out of the sky.*]

Julie. [*Sternly.*] Don't take anything from him. He's probably stolen it somewhere. [*To* LILIOM.] In God's name, be off with you.

Louise. Yes, be off with you. Be off. [*She slams the gate.*]

Liliom. Miss—please, Miss—I've got to do something good—or—do something good—a good deed——

Louise. [*Pointing with her right hand.*] That's the way out.

Liliom. Miss——

Louise. Get out!

Liliom. Miss! [*Looks up at her suddenly and slaps her extended hand, so that the slap resounds loudly.*]

Louise. Mother! [*Looks dazedly at* LILIOM, *who bows his head dismayed, forlorn.* JULIE *rises and looks at* LILIOM *in astonishment. There is a long pause.*]

Julie. [*Comes over to them slowly.*] What's the matter here?

Louise. [*Bewildered, does not take her eyes off* LILIOM.] Mother—the man—he hit me—on the hand—hard—I heard the sound of it—but it didn't hurt—mother—it didn't hurt—it was like a caress—as if he had just touched my hand tenderly.

[*She hides behind* JULIE. LILIOM *sulkily raises his head and looks at* JULIE.]

Julie. [*Softly.*] Go, my child. Go into the house. Go.

Louise. [*Going.*] But mother—I'm afraid—it sounded so loud—— [*Weepingly.*] And it didn't hurt at all—just as if he'd—kissed my hand instead—mother. [*She hides her face.*]

Julie. Go in, my child, go in.

[LOUISE *goes slowly into the house.* JULIE *watches her until she has disappeared, then turns slowly to* LILIOM.]

Julie. You struck my child.

Liliom. Yes—I struck her.

Julie. Is that what you came for, to strike my child?

Liliom. No—I didn't come for that—but I did strike her—and now I'm going back.

Julie. In the name of the Lord Jesus, who are you?

Liliom. [*Simply.*] A poor, tired beggar

who came a long way and who was hungry. And I took your soup and bread and I struck your child. Are you angry with me?

Julie. [*Her hand on her heart; fearfully, wonderingly.*] Jesus protect me—I don't understand it—I'm not angry—not angry at all——

[LILIOM *goes to the doorway and leans against the doorpost, his back to the audience.* JULIE *goes to the table and sits.*]

Julie. Louise! [LOUISE *comes out of the house.*] Sit down, dear, we'll finish eating.

Louise. Has he gone?

Julie. Yes. [*They are both seated at the table.* LOUISE, *her head in her hands, is staring into space.*] Why don't you eat, dear?

Louise. What has happened, mother?

Julie. Nothing, my child.

[*The* HEAVENLY POLICEMEN *appear outside.* LILIOM *walks slowly off at left. The* FIRST POLICEMAN *makes a deploring gesture. Both shake their heads deploringly and follow* LILIOM *slowly off at left.*]

Louise. Mother, dear, why won't you tell me?

Julie. What is there to tell you, child? Nothing has happened. We were peacefully eating, and a beggar came who talked of bygone days, and then I thought of your father.

Louise. My father?

Julie. Your father—Liliom.

[*There is a pause.*]

Louise. Mother—tell me—has it ever happened to you—has anyone ever hit you—without hurting you in the least?

Julie. Yes, my child. It has happened to me, too. [*There is a pause.*]

Louise. Is it possible for someone to hit you—hard like that—real loud and hard—and not hurt you at all?

Julie. It is possible, dear—that someone may beat you and beat you and beat you,—and not hurt you at all.——

[*There is a pause. Nearby an organ-grinder has stopped. The music of his organ begins.*]

THE END

CYRANO DE BERGERAC

By EDMOND ROSTAND

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EDMOND ROSTAND AND HIS PLAYS

Edmond Rostand, the author of *Cyrano de Bergerac,* was born in Marseilles in 1868. His first important play, *The Romancers,* was produced by the Comédie Française in 1894. In his two next plays Sarah Bernhardt acted the principal parts. He wrote *Cyrano de Bergerac* in order to provide a brilliant part for Coquelin. The first performance of *Cyrano* was an event in the theatre comparable to that of Victor Hugo's *Hernani* in 1830, and the play proved to be the greatest stage success of the age. *L'Aiglon,* Rostand's next play, was written for Bernhardt, who played the title rôle and who also took the principal part in *Chantecler* in 1910. After this Rostand wrote only two more plays. He died in 1918.

Rostand is a brilliant phenomenon, not at all characteristic of the modern French theatre. It is true that he was only one of several dramatists of his period who struggled to bring the drama back to poetry and romance; but none of these succeeded in his purpose, and only Rostand, although he too failed in his attempt, by sheer force of genius made himself significant. In French drama naturalism and realism were dominant, and plain prose was the vehicle. But all of Rostand's plays were composed in revolt against the current practice, a revolt not necessarily conscious, however; for Rostand is instinctively a poet and romancer, and was bound to be such in any age and no matter what the practice of the theatre. His plays are either concerned with the world of the past or with that of pure imagination; in any event, with a world of romance. He writes in verse, marvelously embroidered, astonishingly facile, and capable of many moods. But Rostand, though not representative of the French theatre of his own day, owes much to the theatre of the past: to Shakespeare; to the dramatists of Italy; to his French predecessors, especially Victor Hugo, who taught him the technique of melodrama and furnished him with a basic model for his verse, and to Sardou, who taught him a variety of effective stage devices. His plots are not especially original; his situations are usually those of theatre tradition; his women, at least, are mere conventional figures. Upon such shortcomings certain French critics of Rostand, who refuse to rate him as highly as his foreign admirers think proper, are rather indignantly insistent. But Rostand's merits would seem on the whole to outweigh his defects. He has an imagination that can create a world of its own; a wealth of sympathy for his own characters; an almost infallible sense of the theatre; brilliant wit and penetrating satire; and a verse that is handled with superb brilliancy and ease.

The reasons for the overwhelming popularity of *Cyrano* are fairly obvious. It portrays the historical poet, dramatist, lover, and fighter of seventeenth-century France much as he actually was, and establishes an environment for him with the same kind of completeness that D'Annunzio shows in creating the atmosphere for his *Francesca da Rimini.* It tells a good story full of tense situations, sparkles with wit, contains much beauty of phrase, portrays a wide variety of emotions, and posseses an indefinable charm compounded of all its many pleasing qualities. French of the French though it be, it is yet universal in its appeal. It is certainly not representative of the theatre of its day; it established no school; it failed to stem the tide of prose and realism, and stands apart, a lonely and engaging phenomenon; but it remains the one French play of its period that has toured the theatres of the entire world and that has made the name of its hero familiar to millions outside of his native country.

Cyrano was performed first in 1897 at the Théâtre de la Porte Saint-Martin, in Paris. Its first production in America was by Richard Mansfield in New York in 1898. In 1899 Coquelin, who played the rôle of Cyrano, and Sarah Bernhardt, who played that of Roxane, brought the play to London, and to New York in the year following. Its subsequent career on the stage is known to all who follow the theatre. The most celebrated as well as most successful recent revival of *Cyrano* is that by Walter Hampden.

CHARACTERS

Cyrano de Bergerac
Christian de Neuvillette
Comte de Guiche
Ragueneau
Le Bret
Captain Carbon de Castel-Jaloux
Lignière
De Valvert
Montfleury
Bellerose
Jodelet
Cuigy
Brissaille
A Bore
A Mousquetaire
Other Mousquetaire
A Spanish Officer
A Light-Cavalry Man
A Doorkeeper
A Burgher
His Son
A Pickpocket
A Spectator
A Watchman
Bertrandou the Fifer
A Capuchin
Two Musicians
Seven Cadets
Three Marquises
Poets
Pastrycooks

Roxane
Sister Martha
Lise
The Sweetmeat Vender
Mother Margaret
The Duenna
Sister Claire
An Actress
A Soubrette
A Flower-Girl
Pages

The crowd, bourgeois, marquises, mousquetaires, pickpockets, pastrycooks, poets, Gascony Cadets, players, fiddlers, pages, children, Spanish soldiers, spectators, précieuses, actresses, bourgeoises, nuns, etc.

The action takes place in Paris and in Arras in the first half of the seventeenth century

CYRANO DE BERGERAC

ACT ONE

A PLAY AT THE HOTEL DE BOURGOGNE

The great hall of the Hotel de Bourgogne, in 1640. A sort of tennis-court arranged and decorated for theatrical performances.

The hall is a long rectangle, seen obliquely, so that one side of it constitutes the background, which runs from the position of the front wing at the right, to the line of the furthest wing at the left, and forms an angle with the stage, which is equally seen obliquely.

This stage is furnished, on both sides, along the wings, with benches. The drop-curtain is composed of two tapestry hangings, which can be drawn apart. Above a harlequin cloak, the royal escutcheon. Broad steps lead from the raised platform of the stage into the house. On either side of these steps, the musicians' seats. A row of candles fills the office of footlights.

Two galleries run along the side; the lower one is divided into boxes. No seats in the pit, which is the stage proper. At the back of the pit, that is to say, at the right, in the front, a few seats raised like steps, one above the other; and, under a stairway which leads to the upper seats, and of which the lower end only is visible, a stand decked with small candelabra, jars full of flowers, flagons and glasses, dishes heaped with sweetmeats, etc.

In the centre of the background, under the box-tier, the entrance to the theatre, large door which half opens to let in the spectators. On the panels of this door, and in several corners, and above the sweetmeat stand, red playbills announcing La Clorise.

At the rise of the curtain, the house is nearly dark, and still empty. The chandeliers are let down in the middle of the pit, until time to light them.

The audience, arriving gradually. Cavaliers, burghers, lackeys, pages, fiddlers, etc.

A tumult of voices is heard beyond the door; enter brusquely a Cavalier.

Doorkeeper [*running in after him*]. Not so fast! Your fifteen pence!

Cavalier. I come in admission free!

Doorkeeper. And why?

Cavalier. I belong to the king's light cavalry!

Doorkeeper [*to another* Cavalier *who has entered*]. You?

Second Cavalier. I do not pay!

Doorkeeper. But . . .

Second Cavalier. I belong to the mousquetaires!

First Cavalier [*to the* Second]. It does not begin before two. The floor is empty. Let us have a bout with foils.

[*They fence with foils they have brought.*]

A Lackey [*entering*]. Pst! . . . Flanquin!

Other Lackey [*arrived a moment before*]. Champagne? . . .

First Lackey [*taking a pack of cards from his doublet and showing it to* Second Lackey]. Cards. Dice. [*Sits down on the floor.*] Let us have a game.

Second Lackey [*sitting down likewise*]. You rascal, willingly!

First Lackey [*taking from his pocket a bit of candle which he lights and sticks on the floor*]. I prigged an eyeful of my master's light!

One of the Watch [*to a* Flower-Girl, *who comes forward*]. It is pleasant getting here before the lights. [*Puts his arm around her waist.*]

One of the Fencers [*taking a thrust*]. Hit!

One of the Gamblers. Clubs!

The Watchman [*pursuing the girl*]. A kiss!

The Youth [*to his father*]. What are we shall be seen!

The Watchman [*drawing her into a dark corner*]. No, we shall not!

A Man [*sitting down on the floor with others who have brought provisions*]. By coming early, you get a comfortable chance to eat.

A Burgher [*leading his son*]. This should be a good place, my boy. Let us stay here.

One of the Gamblers. Ace wins!

A Man [*taking a bottle from under his cloak and sitting down*]. A proper toper, toping Burgundy [*drinks*], I say should tope it in Burgundy House!

The Burgher [*to his son*]. Might one not suppose we had stumbled into some house of evil fame? [*Points with his cane at the drunkard.*] Guzzlers! . . . [*In breaking guard one of the fencers jostles him.*] Brawlers! . . . [*He falls between the gamblers.*] Gamesters! . . .

The Watchman [*behind him, still teasing the flower-girl*]. A kiss!

The Burgher [*dragging his son precipitately away*]. Bless my soul! . . . And to reflect that in this very house, my son, were given the plays of the great Rotrou!

The Youth. And those of the great Corneille!

[*A band of* PAGES *holding hands rush in performing a farandole and singing.*]

Pages. Tra la la la la la la la! . . .

Doorkeeper [*severely to the* PAGES]. Look, now! . . . you pages, you! none of your tricks!

First Page [*with wounded dignity*]. Sir! . . . this want of confidence . . . [*As soon as the doorkeeper has turned away, briskly to the* SECOND PAGE.] Have you a string about you?

Second Page. With a fish-hook at the end!

First Page. We will sit up there and angle for wigs!

A Pickpocket [*surrounded by a number of individuals of dubious appearance*]. Come now, my little hopefuls, and learn your A B C's of trade. Being as you're not used to hooking . . .

Second Page [*shouting to other* PAGES *who have already taken seats in the upper gallery*]. Ho! . . . Did you bring any pea-shooters?

Third Page [*from above*]. Yes! . . . And pease! . . . [*Shoots down a volley of pease.*]

The Youth [*to his father*]. What are we going to see?

The Burgher. Clorise.

The Youth. By whom?

The Burgher. By Balthazar Baro. Ah, what a play it is! . . . [*Goes toward the back on his son's arm.*]

Pickpocket [*to his disciples*]. Particularly the lace-ruffles at the knees, . . . you're to snip off carefully!

A Spectator [*to another, pointing toward an upper seat*]. Look! On the first night of the Cid, I was perched up there!

Pickpocket [*with pantomimic suggestion of spiriting away*]. Watches . . .

The Burgher [*coming forward again with his son*]. The actors you are about to see, my son, are among the most illustrious . . .

Pickpocket [*with show of subtracting with furtive little tugs*]. Pocket-handkerchiefs . . .

The Burgher. Montfleury . . .

Somebody [*shouting from the upper gallery*]. Make haste, and light the chandeliers!

The Burgher. Bellerose, l'Épy, the Beaupré, Jodelet . . .

A Page [*in the pit*]. Ah! . . . Here comes the goody-seller!

The Sweetmeat Vender [*appearing behind the stand*]. Oranges . . . Milk . . . Raspberry cordial . . . Citron-wine . . .

[*Hubbub at the door.*]

Falsetto Voice [*outside*]. Make room, ruffians!

One of the Lackeys [*astonished*]. The marquises . . . in the pit!

Other Lackey. Oh, for an instant only!

[*Enter a band of foppish* YOUNG MARQUISES.]

One of the Marquises [*looking around the half-empty house*]. What? . . . We happen in like so many linen-drapers? Without disturbing anybody? treading on any feet? . . . Too bad! too bad! too bad! [*He finds himself near several other gentlemen, come in a moment before.*] Cuigy, Brissaille!

[*Effusive embraces.*]

Cuigy. We are of the faithful indeed. We are here before the lights.

The Marquis. Ah, do not speak of it! . . . It has put me in such a humor!

Other Marquis. Be comforted, marquis here comes the candle-lighter!

The Audience [*greeting the arrival of the candle-lighter*]. Ah! . . .

[*Many gather around the chandeliers while they are being lighted. A few have taken seats in the galleries.*]

[LIGNIÈRE *enters, arm in arm with*

CHRISTIAN DE NEUVILLETTE. LIGNIÈRE, *in somewhat disordered apparel, appearance of gentlemanly drunkard.* CHRISTIAN, *becomingly dressed, but in clothes of a slightly obsolete elegance.*]

Cuigy. Lignière!

Brissaille [*laughing*]. Not tipsy yet?

Lignière [*low to* CHRISTIAN]. Shall I present you? [CHRISTIAN *nods assent.*] Baron de Neuvillette . . .

[*Exchange of bows.*]

The Audience [*cheering the ascent of the first lighted chandelier*]. Ah! . . .

Cuigy [*to* BRISSAILLE, *looking at* CHRISTIAN]. A charming head . . . charming!

First Marquis [*who has overheard*]. Pooh! . . .

Lignière [*presenting* CHRISTIAN]. Messieurs de Cuigy . . . de Brissaille . . .

Christian [*bowing*]. Delighted! . . .

First Marquis [*to* SECOND]. He is a pretty fellow enough, but is dressed in the fashion of some other year!

Lignière [*to* CUIGY]. Monsieur is lately arrived from Touraine.

Christian. Yes, I have been in Paris not over twenty days. I enter the Guards tomorrow, the Cadets.

First Marquis [*looking at those who appear in the boxes*]. There comes the président Aubry!

Sweetmeat Vender. Oranges! Milk!

The Fiddlers [*tuning*]. La . . . la . . .

Cuigy [*to* CHRISTIAN, *indicating the house which is filling*]. A good house! . . .

Christian. Yes, crowded.

First Marquis. The whole of fashion!

[*They give the names of the women, as, very brilliantly attired, these enter the boxes. Exchange of bows and smiles.*]

Second Marquis. Mesdames de Guéménée . . .

Cuigy. De Bois-Dauphin . . .

First Marquis. Whom . . . time was! . . . we loved! . . .

Brissaille. . . . de Chavigny . . .

Second Marquis. Who still plays havoc with our hearts!

Lignière. Tiens! Monsieur de Corneille has come back from Rouen!

The Youth [*to his father*]. The Academy is present?

The Burgher. Yes . . . I perceive more than one member of it. Yonder are Boudu, Boissat and Cureau . . . Porchères, Colomby, Bourzeys, Bourdon, Arbaut . . . All names of which not one will be forgotten. What a beautiful thought it is!

First Marquis. Attention! Our précieuses are coming into their seats . . . Barthénoide, Urimédonte, Cassandace, Félixérie . . .

Second Marquis. Ah, how exquisite are their surnames! . . . Marquis, can you tell them off, all of them?

First Marquis. I can tell them off, all of them, marquis!

Lignière [*drawing* CHRISTIAN *aside*]. Dear fellow, I came in here to be of use to you. The lady does not come. I revert to my vice!

Christian [*imploring*]. No! No! . . . You who turn into ditties Town and Court, stay by me; you will be able to tell me for whom it is I am dying of love!

The Leader of the Violins [*rapping on his desk with his bow*]. Gentlemen! . . . [*He raises his bow.*]

Sweetmeat Vender. Macaroons . . . Citronade . . .

[*The fiddles begin playing.*]

Christian. I fear . . . oh, I fear to find that she is fanciful and intricate! I dare not speak to her, for I am of a simple wit. The language written and spoken in these days bewilders and baffles me. I am a plain soldier . . . shy, to boot.—She is always at the right, there, the end: the empty box.

Lignière [*with show of leaving*]. I am going.

Christian [*still attempting to detain him*]. Oh, no! . . . Stay, I beseech you!

Lignière. I cannot. D'Assoucy is expecting me at the pot-house. Here is a mortal drought!

Sweetmeat Vender [*passing before him with a tray*]. Orangeade? . . .

Lignière. Ugh!

Sweetmeat Vender. Milk? . . .

Lignière. Pah! . . .

Sweetmeat Vender. Lacrima? . . .

Lignière. Stop! [*To* CHRISTIAN]. I will tarry a bit. . . . Let us see this lacrima?

[*Sits down at the sweetmeat stand The* VENDER *pours him a glass of lacrima.*]

[*Shouts among the audience at the entrance of a little, merry-faced, roly-poly man.*]

Audience. Ah, Ragueneau! . . .

Lignière [*to* CHRISTIAN]. Ragueneau, who keeps the great cook-shop.

Ragueneau [*attired like a pastrycook in his Sunday best, coming quickly toward* LIGNIÈRE]. Monsieur, have you seen Monsieur de Cyrano?

Lignière [*presenting* RAGUENEAU *to* CHRISTIAN]. The pastrycook of poets and of players!

Ragueneau [*abashed*]. Too much honor. . . .

Lignière. No modesty! . . . Mecænas! . . .

Ragueneau. It is true, those gentlemen are among my customers. . . .

Lignière. Debitors! . . . A considerable poet himself. . . .

Ragueneau. It has been said! . . .

Lignière. Daft on poetry! . . .

Ragueneau. It is true that for an ode . . .

Lignière. You are willing to give at any time a tart!

Ragueneau. . . . let. A tart-let.

Lignière. Kind soul, he tries to cheapen his charitable acts! And for a triolet were you not known to give . . . ?

Ragueneau. Rolls. Just rolls.

Lignière [*severely*]. Buttered! . . . And the play, you are fond of the play?

Ragueneau. It is with me a passion!

Lignière. And you settle for your entrance fee with a pastry currency. Come now, among ourselves, what did you have to give to-day for admittance here?

Ragueneau. Four custards . . . eighteen lady-fingers. [*He looks all around.*] Monsieur de Cyrano is not here. I wonder at it.

Lignière. And why?

Ragueneau. Montfleury is billed to play.

Lignière. So it is, indeed. That ton of man will to-day entrance us in the part of Phœdo . . . Phœdo! . . . But what is that to Cyrano?

Ragueneau. Have you not heard? He interdicted Montfleury, whom he has taken in aversion, from appearing for one month upon the stage.

Lignière [*who is at his fourth glass*]. Well?

Ragueneau. Montfleury is billed to play.

Cuigy [*who has drawn near with his companions*]. He cannot be prevented.

Ragueneau. He cannot? . . . Well, I am here to see!

First Marquis. What is this Cyrano?

Cuigy. A crack-brain!

Second Marquis. Of quality?

Cuigy. Enough for daily uses. He is a cadet in the Guards. [*Pointing out a gentleman who is coming and going about the pit, as if in search of somebody.*] But his friend Le Bret can tell you. [*Calling.*] Le Bret! . . . [LE BRET *comes toward them.*] You are looking for Bergerac?

Le Bret. Yes. I am uneasy.

Cuigy. Is it not a fact that he is a most uncommon fellow?

Le Bret [*affectionately*]. The most exquisite being he is that walks beneath the moon!

Ragueneau. Poet!

Cuigy. Swordsman!

Brissaille. Physicist!

Le Bret. Musician!

Lignière. And what an extraordinary aspect he presents!

Ragueneau. I will not go so far as to say that I believe our grave Philippe de Champaigne will leave us a portrait of him; but, the bizarre, excessive, whimsical fellow that he is would certainly have furnished the late Jacques Callot with a type of madcap fighter for one of his masques. Hat with triple feather, doublet with twice-triple skirt, cloak which his interminable rapier lifts up behind, with pomp, like the insolent tail of a cock; prouder than all the Artabans that Gascony ever bred, he goes about in his stiff Punchinello ruff, airing a nose. . . . Ah, gentlemen, what a nose is that! One cannot look upon such a specimen of the nasigera without exclaiming, "No! truly, the man exaggerates." . . . After that, one smiles, one says: "He will take it off." . . . But Monsieur de Bergerac never takes it off at all.

Le Bret [*shaking his head*]. He wears it always . . . and cuts down whoever breathes a syllable in comment.

Ragueneau [*proudly*]. His blade is half the shears of Fate!

First Marquis [*shrugging his shoulders*]. He will not come!

Ragueneau. He will. I wager you a chicken à la Ragueneau.

First Marquis [*laughing*]. Very well!

[*Murmur of admiration in the house.* ROXANE *has appeared in*

her box. She takes a seat in the front, her duenna at the back. CHRISTIAN, *engaged in paying the* SWEETMEAT VENDER, *does not look.*]

Second Marquis [*uttering a series of small squeals*]. Ah, gentlemen, she is horrifically enticing!

First Marquis. A strawberry set in a peach, and smiling!

Second Marquis. So fresh, that being near her, one might catch cold in his heart!

Christian [*looks up, sees* ROXANE, *and, agitated, seizes* LIGNIÈRE *by the arm*]. That is she!

Lignière [*looking*]. Ah, that is she! . . .

Christian. Yes. Tell me at once. . . . Oh, I am afraid! . . .

Lignière [*sipping his wine slowly*]. Magdeleine Robin, surnamed Roxane Subtle. Euphuistic.

Christian. Alack-a-day!

Lignière. Unmarried. An orphan. A cousin of Cyrano's . . . the one of whom they were talking.

[*While he is speaking, a richly dressed nobleman, wearing the order of the Holy Ghost on a blue ribbon across his breast, enters* ROXANE'S *box, and, without taking a seat, talks with her a moment.*]

Christian [*starting*]. That man? . . .

Lignière [*who is beginning to be tipsy, winking*]. Hé! Hé! Comte de Guiche. Enamored of her. But married to the niece of Armand de Richelieu. Wishes to manage a match between Roxane and certain sorry lord, one Monsieur de Valvert, vicomte and . . . easy. She does not subscribe to his views, but De Guiche is powerful: he can persecute to some purpose a simple commoner. But I have duly set forth his shady machinations in a song which . . . Ho! he must bear me a grudge! The end was wicked . . . Listen! . . . [*He rises, staggering, and lifting his glass, is about to sing.*]

Christian. No. Good-evening.

Lignière. You are going? . . .

Christian. To find Monsieur de Valvert.

Lignière. Have a care. You are the one who will get killed. [*Indicating* ROXANE *by a glance.*] Stay. Some one is looking . . .

Christian. It is true . . .

[*He remains absorbed in the contemplation of* ROXANE. *The pickpockets, seeing his abstracted air, draw nearer to him.*]

Lignière. Ah, you are going to stay. Well, I am going. I am thirsty! And I am looked for . . . at all the public-houses! [*Exit unsteadily.*]

Le Bret [*who has made the circuit of the house, returning toward* RAGUENEAU, *in a tone of relief*]. Cyrano is not here.

Ragueneau. And yet . . .

Le Bret. I will trust to Fortune he has not seen the announcement.

The Audience. Begin! Begin!

One of the Marquises [*watching* DE GUICHE, *who comes from* ROXANE'S *box, and crosses the pit, surrounded by obsequious satellites, among whom the* VICOMTE DE VALVERT]. Always a court about him, De Guiche!

Other Marquis. Pf! . . . Another Gascon!

First Marquis. A Gascon, of the cold and supple sort. That sort succeeds. Believe me, it will be best to offer him our duty.

[*They approach* DE GUICHE.]

Second Marquis. These admirable ribbons! What color, Comte de Guiche? Should you call it Kiss-me-Sweet or . . . Expiring Fawn?

De Guiche. This shade is called Sick Spaniard.

First Marquis. Appropriately called, for shortly, thanks to your valor, the Spaniard will be sick indeed, in Flanders!

De Guiche. I am going upon the stage. Are you coming? [*He walks toward the stage, followed by all the* MARQUISES *and men of quality. He turns and calls.*] Valvert, come!

Christian [*who has been listening and watching them, starts on hearing that name*]. The vicomte! . . . Ah, in his face . . . in his face I will fling my . . . [*He puts his hand to his pocket and finds the pickpocket's hand. He turns.*] *Hein?*

Pickpocket. Aï!

Christian [*without letting him go*]. I was looking for a glove.

Pickpocket [*with an abject smile*]. And you found a hand. [*In a different tone, low and rapid.*] Let me go . . . I will tell you a secret.

Christian [*without releasing him*]. Well?

Pickpocket. Lignière who has just left you . . .

Christian [*as above*]. Yes? . . .

Pickpocket. Has not an hour to live. A song he made annoyed one of the great, and a hundred men — I am one of them — will be posted to-night . . .

Christian. A hundred? . . . By whom?

Pickpocket. Honor . . .

Christian [*shrugging his shoulders*]. Oh! . . .

Pickpocket [*with great dignity*]. Among rogues!

Christian. Where will they be posted?

Pickpocket. At the Porte de Nesle, on his way home. Inform him.

Christian [*letting him go*]. But where can I find him?

Pickpocket. Go to all the taverns: the Golden Vat, the Pine-Apple, the Belt and Bosom, the Twin Torches, the Three Funnels, and in each one leave a scrap of writing warning him.

Christian. Yes. I will run! . . . Ah, the blackguards! A hundred against one! . . . [*Looks lovingly toward* Roxane.] Leave her! . . . [*Furiously, looking toward* Valvert.] And him! . . . But Lignière must be prevented. [*Exit running.*]

[De Guiche, the Marquises, *all the gentry have disappeared behind the curtain, to place themselves on the stage-seats. The pit is crowded. There is not an empty seat in the boxes or the gallery.*]

The Audience. Begin!

A Burgher [*whose wig goes sailing off at the end of a string held by one of the* Pages *in the upper gallery*]. My wig!

Screams of Delight. He is bald! . . . The pages! . . . Well done! . . . Ha, ha, ha! . . .

The Burgher [*furious, shaking his fist*]. Imp of Satan! . . .

[*Laughter and screams, beginning very loud and decreasing suddenly. Dead silence.*]

Le Bret [*astonished*]. This sudden hush? . . . [*One of the spectators whispers in his ear.*] Ah? . . .

The Spectator. I have it from a reliable quarter.

Running Murmurs. Hush! . . . Has he come? No! . . . Yes, he has! . . . In the box with the grating. . . . The cardinal! . . . the cardinal! . . . the cardinal! . . .

One of the Pages. What a shame! . . . Now we shall have to behave!

[*Knocking on the stage. Complete stillness. Pause.*]

Voice of one of the Marquises [*breaking the deep silence, behind the curtain*]. Snuff that candle!

Other Marquis [*thrusting his head out between the curtains*]. A chair!

[*A chair is passed from hand to hand, above the heads. The* Marquis *takes it and disappears, after kissing his hand repeatedly toward the boxes.*]

A Spectator. Silence!

[*Once more, the three knocks. The curtain opens. Tableau. The* Marquises *seated at the sides, in attitudes of languid haughtiness. The stage-setting is the faint-colored bluish sort usual in a pastoral. Four small crystal candelabra light the stage. The violins play softly.*]

Le Bret [*to* Ragueneau, *under breath*]. Is Montfleury the first to appear?

Ragueneau [*likewise under breath*]. Yes. The opening lines are his.

Le Bret. Cyrano is not here.

Ragueneau. I have lost my wager.

Le Bret. Let us be thankful. Let us be thankful.

[*A bagpipe is heard.* Montfleury *appears upon the stage, enormous, in a conventional shepherd's costume, with a rose-wreathed hat set jauntily on the side of his head, breathing into a beribboned bagpipe.*]

The Pit [*applauding*]. Bravo, Montfleury! Montfleury!

Montfleury [*after bowing, proceeds to play the part of* Phœdo].

Happy the man who, freed from Fashion's fickle sway,
In exile self-prescribed whiles peaceful hours away;
Who when Zephyrus sighs amid the answering trees . . .

A Voice [*from the middle of the pit*]. Rogue! Did I not forbid you for one month?

[*Consternation. Every one looks around. Murmurs.*]

Various Voices. Hein? What? What is the matter?

[*Many in the boxes rise to see.*]

Cuigy. It is he!

Le Bret [*alarmed*]. Cyrano!

The Voice. King of the Obese! Incontinently vanish! . . .

The Whole Audience [*indignantly*]. Oh! . . .

Montfleury. But . . .

The Voice. You stop to muse upon the matter?

Several Voices [*from the pit and the boxes*]. Hush! . . . Enough! . . . Proceed, Montfleury. . . . Fear nothing!

Montfleury [*in an unsteady voice*]. Happy the man who freed from Fashion's f— . . .

The Voice [*more threatening than before*]. How is this? Shall I be constrained, Man of the Monster Belly, to enforce my regulation . . . regularly?

[*An arm holding a cane leaps above the level of the heads.*]

Montfleury [*in a voice growing fainter and fainter*].
Happy the man . . .

[*The cane is wildly flourished.*]

The Voice. Leave the stage!

The Pit. Oh! . . .

Montfleury [*choking*].
Happy the man who freed . . .

Cyrano [*appears above the audience, standing upon a chair, his arms folded on his chest, his hat at a combative angle, his moustache on end, his nose terrifying*]. Ah! I shall lose my temper!

[*Sensation at sight of him.*]

Montfleury [*to the* MARQUISES]. Messieurs, I appeal to you!

One of the Marquises [*languidly*]. But go ahead! . . . Play!

Cyrano. Fat man, if you attempt it, I will dust the paint off you with this!

The Marquis. Enough!

Cyrano. Let every little landlord keep silence in his seat, or I will ruffle his ribbons with my cane!

All the Marquises [*rising*]. This is too much! . . . Montfleury. . . .

Cyrano. Let Montfleury go home, or stay, and, having cut his ears off, I will disembowel him!

A Voice. But . . .

Cyrano. Let him go home, I said!

Other Voice. But after all . . .

Cyrano. It is not yet done? [*With show of turning up his sleeves.*] Very well, upon that stage, as on a platter trimmed with green, you shall see me carve that mount of brawn . . .

Montfleury [*calling up his whole dignity*]. Monsieur, you cast indignity, in my person, upon the Muse!

Cyrano [*very civilly*]. Monsieur, if that lady, with whom you have naught to do, had the pleasure of beholding you . . . just as you stand, there, like a decorated pot! . . . she could not live, I do protest, but she hurled her buskin at you!

The Pit. Montfleury! . . . Montfleury! . . . Give us Baro's piece!

Cyrano [*to those shouting around him*]. I beg you will show some regard for my scabbard: it is ready to give up the sword!

[*The space around him widens.*]

The Crowd [*backing away*]. Hey . . . softly, there!

Cyrano [*to* MONTFLEURY]. Go off!

The Crowd [*closing again, and grumbling*]. Oh! . . . Oh!

Cyrano [*turning suddenly*]. Has somebody objections?

[*The crowd again pushes away from him.*]

A Voice [*at the back, singing*].

Monsieur de Cyrano, one sees,
Inclines to be tyrannical;
In spite of that tyrannicle
We shall see La Clorise!

The Whole Audience [*catching up the tune*]. La Clorise! La Clorise!

Cyrano. Let me hear that song again, and I will do you all to death with my stick!

A Burgher. Samson come back! . . .

Cyrano. Lend me your jaw, good man!

A Lady [*in one of the boxes*]. This is unheard of!

A Man. It is scandalous!

A Burgher. It is irritating, to say no more.

A Page. What fun it is!

The Pit. Hsss! . . . Montfluery! . . . Cyrano! . . .

Cyrano. Be still! . . .

The Pit [*in uproar*]. Hee-haw! . . .

Baaaaah! . . . Bow-wow! . . . Cockadoodledooooooo!

Cyrano. I will . . .

A Page. Meeeow!

Cyrano. I order you to hold your tongues! . . . I dare the floor collectively to utter another sound! . . . I challenge you, one and all! . . . I will take down your names . . . Step forward, budding heroes! Each in his turn. You shall be given numbers. Come, which one of you will open the joust with me? You, monsieur? No! You? No! The first that offers is promised all the mortuary honors due the brave. Let all who wish to die hold up their hands! [*Silence.*] It is modesty that makes you shrink from the sight of my naked sword? Not a name? Not a hand? — Very good. Then I proceed. [*Turning toward the stage where* MONTFLEURY *is waiting in terror.*] As I was saying, it is my wish to see the stage cured of this tumor. Otherwise . . . [*claps hand to his sword*] the lancet!

Montfleury. I . . .

Cyrano [*gets down from his chair, and sits in the space that has become vacant around him, with the ease of one at home*]. Thrice will I clap my hands, O plenilune! At the third clap . . . eclipse!

The Pit [*diverted*]. Ah! . . .

Cyrano [*clapping his hands*]. One! . . .

Montfleury. I . . .

A Voice [*from one of the boxes*]. Do not go! . . .

The Pit. He will stay! . . . He will go! . . .

Montfleury. Messieurs, I feel . . .

Cyrano. Two! . . .

Montfleury. I feel it will perhaps be wiser . . .

Cyrano. Three! . . .

[MONTFLEURY *disappears, as if through a trap-door. Storm of laughter, hissing, catcalls.*]

The House. Hoo! . . . Hoo! . . . Milksop! . . . Come back! . . .

Cyrano [*beaming, leans back in his chair and crosses his legs*]. Let him come back, if he dare!

A Burgher. The spokesman of the company!

[BELLEROSE *comes forward on the stage and bows.*]

The Boxes. Ah, there comes Bellerose!

Bellerose [*with elegant bearing and diction*]. Noble ladies and gentlemen . . .

The Pit. No! No! Jodelet . . . We want Jodelet! . . .

Jodelet [*comes forward, speaks through his nose*]. Pack of swine!

The Pit. That is right! . . . Well said! . . . Bravo!

Jodelet. Don't bravo me! . . . The portly tragedian, whose paunch is your delight, felt sick! . . .

The Pit. He is a poltroon! . . .

Jodelet. He was obliged to leave. . . .

The Pit. Let him come back!

Some. No!

Others. Yes! . . .

A Youth [*to* CYRANO]. But, when all is said, monsieur, what good grounds have you for hating Montfleury?

Cyrano [*amiably, sitting as before*]. Young gosling, I have two, whereof each, singly, would be ample. Primo: He is an execrable actor, who bellows, and with grunts that would disgrace a water-carrier launches the verse that should go forth as if on pinions! . . . Secundo: is my secret.

The Old Burgher [*behind* CYRANO]. But without compunction you deprive us of hearing La Clorise. I am determined . . .

Cyrano [*turning his chair around so as to face the old gentleman; respectfully*] Venerable mule, old Baro's verses being what they are, I do it without compunction, as you say.

The Précieuses [*in the boxes*]. Ha! . . . Ho! . . . Our own Baro! . . . My dear, did you hear that? How can such a thing be said? . . . Ha! . . . Ho! . . .

Cyrano [*turning his chair so as to face the boxes; gallantly*]. Beautiful creatures, do you bloom and shine, be ministers of dreams, your smiles our anodyne. Inspire poets, but poems . . . spare to judge!

Bellerose. But the money which must be given back at the door!

Cyrano [*turning his chair to face the stage*]. Bellerose, you have said the only intelligent thing that has, as yet, been said! Far from me to wrong by so much as a fringe the worshipful mantle of Thespis. . . . [*He rises and flings a bag upon the stage.*] Catch! . . . and keep quiet!

The House [*dazzled*]. Ah! . . . Oh! . . .

Jodelet [*nimbly picking up the bag, weighing it with his hand*]. For such a

price, you are authorized, monsieur, to come and stop the performance every day!

The House. Hoo! . . . Hoo! . . .

Jodelet. Should we be hooted in a body! . . .

Bellerose. The house must be evacuated!

Jodelet. Evacuate it!

[*The audience begins to leave;* CYRANO *looking on with a satisfied air. The crowd, however, becoming interested in the following scene, the exodus is suspended. The women in the boxes who were already standing and had put on their wraps, stop to listen and end by resuming their seats.*]

Le Bret [*to* CYRANO]. What you have done . . . is mad!

A Bore. Montfleury! . . . the eminent actor! . . . What a scandal! . . . But the Duc de Candale is his patron! . . . Have you a patron, you?

Cyrano. No!

The Bore. You have not?

Cyrano. No!

The Bore. What? You are not protected by some great nobleman under the cover of whose name . . .

Cyrano [*exasperated*]. No, I have told you twice. Must I say the same thing thrice? No, I have no protector . . . [*hand on sword*] but this will do.

The Bore. Then, of course, you will leave town.

Cyrano. That will depend.

The Bore. But the Duc de Candale has a long arm . . .

Cyrano. Not so long as mine . . . [*pointing to his sword*] pieced out with this!

The Bore. But you cannot have the presumption . . .

Cyrano. I can, yes.

The Bore. But . . .

Cyrano. And now, . . . face about!

The Bore. But . . .

Cyrano. Face about, I say . . . or else, tell me why you are looking at my nose.

The Bore [*bewildered*]. I . . .

Cyrano [*advancing upon him*]. In what is it unusual?

The Bore [*backing*]. Your worship is mistaken.

Cyrano [*same business as above*]. Is it flabby and pendulous, like a proboscis?

The Bore. I never said . . .

Cyrano. Or hooked like a hawk's beak?

The Bore. I . . .

Cyrano. Do you discern a mole upon the tip?

The Bore. But . . .

Cyrano. Or is a fly disporting himself thereon? What is there wonderful about it?

The Bore. Oh . . .

Cyrano. Is it a freak of nature?

The Bore. But I had refrained from casting so much as a glance at it!

Cyrano. And why, I pray, should you not look at it?

The Bore. I had . . .

Cyrano. So it disgusts you?

The Bore. Sir . . .

Cyrano. Its color strikes you as unwholesome?

The Bore. Sir . . .

Cyrano. Its shape, unfortunate?

The Bore. But far from it!

Cyrano. Then wherefore that depreciating air? . . . Perhaps monsieur thinks it a shade too large?

The Bore. Indeed not. No, indeed. I think it small . . . small,—I should have said, minute!

Cyrano. What? How? Charge me with such a ridiculous defect? Small, my nose? Ho! . . .

The Bore. Heavens!

Cyrano. Enormous, my nose! . . . Contemptible stutterer, snub-nosed and flat-headed, be it known to you that I am proud, proud of such an appendage! inasmuch as a great nose is properly the index of an affable, kindly, courteous man, witty, liberal, brave, such as I am! and such as you are for evermore precluded from supposing yourself, deplorable rogue! For the inglorious surface my hand encounters above your ruff, is no less devoid— [*Strikes him.*]

The Bore. Aï! aï! . . .

Cyrano. Of pride, alacrity and sweep, of perception and of gift, of heavenly spark, of sumptuousness, to sum up all, of NOSE, than that [*turns him around by the shoulders and suits the action to the word*], which stops my boot below your spine!

The Bore [*running off*]. Help! The watch! . . .

Cyrano. Warning to the idle who might find entertainment in my organ of smell. . . . And if the facetious fellow be of birth,

my custom is, before I let him go to chasten him, in front, and higher up, with steel, and not with hide!

De Guiche [*who has stepped down from the stage with the* MARQUISES]. He is becoming tiresome!

Valvert [*shrugging his shoulders*]. It is empty bluster!

De Guiche. Will no one take him up?

Valvert. No one? . . . Wait! I will have one of those shots at him! [*He approaches* CYRANO *who is watching him, and stops in front of him, in an attitude of silly swagger.*] Your . . . your nose is . . . err . . . Your nose . . . is very large!

Cyrano [*gravely*]. Very.

Valvert [*laughs*]. Ha! . . .

Cyrano [*imperturbable*]. Is that all?

Valvert. But . . .

Cyrano. Ah, no, young man, that is not enough! You might have said, dear me, there are a thousand things . . . varying the tone . . . For instance . . . here you are: — Aggressive: "I, monsieur, if I had such a nose, nothing would serve but I must cut it off!" Amicable: "It must be in your way while drinking; you ought to have a special beaker made!" Descriptive: "It is a crag! . . . a peak! . . . a promontory! . . . A promontory, did I say? . . . It is a peninsula!" Inquisitive: "What may the office be of that oblong receptacle? Is it an inkhorn or a scissor-case?" Mincing: "Do you so dote on birds, you have, fond as a father, been at pains to fit the little darlings with a roost?" Blunt: "Tell me, monsieur, you, when you smoke, is it possible you blow the vapor through your nose without a neighbor crying 'The chimney is afire'?" Anxious: "Go with caution, I beseech, lest your head, dragged over by that weight, should drag you over!" Tender: "Have a little sun-shade made for it! It might get freckled!" Learned: "None but the beast, monsieur, mentioned by Aristophanes, the hippocampelephantocamelos, can have borne beneath his forehead so much cartilage and bone!" Off-hand: "What, comrade, is that sort of peg in style? Capital to hang one's hat upon!" Emphatic: "No wind can hope, O lordly nose, to give the whole of you a cold, but the Nor'-Wester!" Dramatic: "It is the Red Sea when it bleeds!" Admiring: "What a sign for a perfumer's shop!" Lyrical: "Art thou a Triton, and is that thy conch?" Simple: "A monument! When is admission free?" Deferent: "Suffer, monsieur, that I should pay you my respects: that is what I call possessing a house of your own!" Rustic: "Hi, boys! Call that a nose? Ye don't gull me! It's either a prize carrot or else a stunted gourd!" Military: "Level against the cavalry!" Practical: "Will you put it up for raffle? Indubitably, sir, it will be the feature of the game!" And finally in parody of weeping Pyramus: "Behold, behold the nose that traitorously destroyed the beauty of its master! and is blushing for the same!" — That, my dear sir, or something not unlike, is what you would have said to me, had you the smallest leaven of letters or of wit; but of wit, O most pitiable of objects made by God, you never had a rudiment, and of letters, you have just those that are needed to spell "fool!" — But, had it been otherwise, and had you been possessed of the fertile fancy requisite to shower upon me, here, in this noble company, that volley of sprightly pleasantries, still should you not have delivered yourself of so much as a quarter of the tenth part of the beginning of the first. . . . For I let off these good things at myself, and with sufficient zest, but do not suffer another to let them off at me!

De Guiche [*attempting to lead away the amazed vicomte*]. Let be, vicomte!

Valvert. That insufferable haughty bearing! . . . A clodhopper without . . . without so much as gloves . . . who goes abroad without points . . . or bow-knots! . . .

Cyrano. My foppery is of the inner man. I do not trick myself out like a popinjay, but I am more fastidious, if I am not so showy. I would not sally forth, by any chance, not washed quite clean of an affront; my conscience foggy about the eye, my honor crumpled, my nicety black-rimmed. I walk with all upon me furbished bright. I plume myself with independence and straightforwardness. It is not a handsome figure, it is my soul, I hold erect as in a brace. I go decked with exploits in place of ribbon-bows. I taper to a point my wit like a moustache. And at my passage through the crowd true sayings ring like spurs!

Valvert. But, sir . . .

Cyrano. I am without gloves? . . . a

mighty matter! I only had one left, of a very ancient pair, and even that became a burden to me . . . I left it in somebody's face.

Valvert. Villian, clod-poll, flat-foot, refuse of the earth!

Cyrano [*taking off his hat and bowing as if the* VICOMTE *had been introducing himself*]. Ah? . . . And mine, Cyrano-Savinien-Hercule of Bergerac!

Valvert [*exasperated*]. Buffoon!

Cyrano [*giving a sudden cry, as if seized with a cramp*]. Aï! . . .

Valvert [*who had started toward the back, turning*]. What is he saying now?

Cyrano [*screwing his face as if in pain*]. It must have leave to stir . . . it has a cramp! It is bad for it to be kept still so long!

Valvert. What is the matter?

Cyrano. My rapier prickles like a foot asleep!

Valvert [*drawing*]. So be it!

Cyrano. I shall give you a charming little hurt!

Valvert [*contemptuous*]. A poet!

Cyrano. Yes, a poet, . . . and to such an extent, that while we fence, I will, hop! extempore, compose you a ballade!

Valvert. A ballade?

Cyrano. I fear you do not know what that is.

Valvert. But . . .

Cyrano [*as if saying a lesson*]. The ballade is composed of three stanzas of eight lines each . . .

Valvert [*stamps with his feet*]. Oh! . . .

Cyrano [*continuing*]. And an envoi of four.

Valvert. You . . .

Cyrano. I will with the same breath fight you and compose one. And at the last line, I will hit you.

Valvert. Indeed you will not!

Cyrano. No? . . . [*Declaiming.*]

Ballade of the duel which in Burgundy House
Monsieur de Bergerac fought with a jack-anapes.

Valvert. And what is that, if you please?

Cyrano. That is the title.

The Audience [*at the highest pitch of excitement*]. Make room! . . . Good sport! . . . Stand aside! . . . Keep still! . . .

[*Tableau. A ring, in the pit, of the interested; the* MARQUISES *and* OFFICERS *scattered among the* BURGHERS *and* COMMON PEOPLE. *The* PAGES *have climbed on the shoulders of various ones, the better to see. All the women are standing in the boxes. At the right,* DE GUICHE *and his attendant gentlemen. At left,* LE BRET, RAGUENEAU, CUIGY, *etc.*]

Cyrano [*closing his eyes a second*]. Wait. I am settling upon the rhymes. There. I have them.

[*In declaiming, he suits the action to the word.*]

Of my broad felt made lighter,
I cast my mantle broad,
And stand, poet and fighter,
To do and to record.
I bow, I draw my sword . . .
En garde! with steel and wit
I play you at first abord . . .
At the last line, I hit!

[*They begin fencing.*]

You should have been politer;
Where had you best be gored?
The left side or the right—ah?
Or next your azure cord?
Or where the spleen is stored?
Or in the stomach pit?
Come we to quick accord . . .
At the last line, I hit!
You falter, you turn whiter?
You do so to afford
Your foe a rhyme in "iter"?
You thrust at me—I ward—
And balance is restored.
Laridon! Look to your spit! . . .
No, you shall not be floored
Before my cue to hit!

[*He announces solemnly.*]

ENVOI

Prince, call upon the Lord! . . .
I skirmish . . . feint a bit . . .
I lunge! . . . I keep my word!
[*The* VICOMTE *staggers;* CYRANO *bows.*]
At the last line, I hit!

[*Acclamations. Applause from the boxes. Flowers and handkerchiefs are thrown. The* OFFICERS *surround and congratulate* CYRANO. RAGUENEAU *dances with delight.* LE BRET *is tearfully joyous and*

at the same time highly troubled. The friends of the VICOMTE *support him off the stage.*]

The Crowd [*in a long shout*]. Ah! . . .

A Light-Cavalry Man. Superb!

A Woman. Sweet!

Ragueneau. Astounding!

A Marquis. Novel!

Le Bret. Insensate!

The Crowd [*pressing around* CYRANO]. Congratulations! . . . Well done! . . . Bravo! . . .

A Woman's Voice. He is a hero!

A Mousquetaire [*striding swiftly toward* CYRANO, *with outstretched hand*]. Monsieur, will you allow me? It was quite, quite excellently done, and I think I know whereof I speak. But, as a fact, I expressed my mind before, by making a huge noise. . . . [*He retires.*]

Cyrano [*to* CUIGY]. Who may the gentleman be?

Cuigy. D'Artagnan.

Le Bret [*to* CYRANO, *taking his arm*]. Come, I wish to talk with you.

Cyrano. Wait till the crowd has thinned. [*To* BELLEROSE.] I may remain?

Bellerose [*deferentially*]. Why, certainly!

[*Shouts are heard outside.*]

Jodelet [*after looking*]. They are hooting Montfleury.

Bellerose [*solemnly*]. *Sic transit!* . . . [*In a different tone, to the doorkeeper and the candle snuffer.*] Sweep and close. Leave the lights. We shall come back, after eating, to rehearse a new farce for to-morrow.

[*Exeunt* JODELET *and* BELLEROSE, *after bowing very low to* CYRANO.]

The Doorkeeper [*to* CYRANO]. Monsieur will not be going to dinner?

Cyrano. I? . . . No.

[*The doorkeeper withdraws.*]

Le Bret [*to* CYRANO]. And this, because? . . .

Cyrano [*proudly*]. Because . . . [*in a different tone, having seen that the doorkeeper is too far to overhear*] I have not a penny!

Le Bret [*making the motion of flinging a bag*]. How is this? The bag of crowns . . .

Cyrano. Monthly remittance, thou lastedst but a day!

Le Bret. And to keep you the remainder of the month? . . .

Cyrano. Nothing is left!

Le Bret. But then, flinging that bag, what a child's prank!

Cyrano. But what a gesture! . . .

The Sweetmeat Vender [*coughing behind her little counter*]. Hm! . . . [CYRANO *and* LE BRET *turn toward her. She comes timidly forward.*] Monsieur, to know you have not eaten . . . makes my heart ache. [*Pointing to the sweetmeat-stand.*] I have there all that is needed . . . [*impulsively*], Help yourself!

Cyrano [*taking off his hat*]. Dear child, despite my Gascon pride, which forbids that I should profit at your hand by the most inconsiderable of dainties, I fear too much less a denial should grieve you; I will accept therefore . . . [*He goes to the stand and selects.*] Oh, a trifle! . . . A grape off this . . . [*She proffers the bunch, he takes a single grape.*] No . . . one! This glass of water . . . [*She starts to pour wine into it, he stops her.*] No . . . clear! And half a macaroon.

[*He breaks in two the macaroon, and returns half.*]

Le Bret. This comes near being silly!

Sweetmeat Vender. Oh, you will take something more! . . .

Cyrano. Yes. Your hand to kiss.

[*He kisses the hand she holds out to him, as if it were that of a princess.*]

Sweetmeat Vender. Monsieur, I thank you. [*Curtseys.*] Good-evening! [*Exit.*]

Cyrano [*to* LE BRET]. I am listening [*He establishes himself before the stand, sets the macaroon before him.*] Dinner! [*does the same with the glass of water*]. Drink! [*and with the grape*]. Dessert! [*He sits down.*] La! let me begin! I was as hungry as a wolf! [*Eating.*] You were saying?

Le Bret. That if you listen to none but those great boobies and swashbucklers your judgment will become wholly perverted. Inquire, will you, of the sensible, concerning the effect produced to-day by your prowesses.

Cyrano [*finishing his macaroon*]. Enormous!

Le Bret. The cardinal . . .

Cyrano [*beaming*]. He was there, the cardinal?

Le Bret. Must have found what you did . . .

Cyrano. To a degree, original.

Le Bret. Still . . .

Cyrano. He is a poet. It cannot be distasteful to him wholly that one should deal confusion to a fellow-poet's play.

Le Bret. But, seriously, you make too many enemies!

Cyrano [*biting into the grape*]. How many, thereabouts, should you think I made to-night?

Le Bret. Eight and forty. Not mentioning the women.

Cyrano. Come, tell them over!

Le Bret. Montfleury, the old merchant, De Guiche, the Vicomte, Baro, the whole Academy . . .

Cyrano. Enough! You steep me in bliss!

Le Bret. But whither will the road you follow lead you? What can your object be?

Cyrano. I was wandering aimlessly; too many roads were open . . . too many resolves, too complex, allowed of being taken. I took . . .

Le Bret. Which?

Cyrano. By far the simplest of them all. I decided to be, in every matter, always, admirable!

Le Bret [*shrugging his shoulders*]. That will do.—But tell me, will you not, the motive—look, the true one!—of your dislike to Montfleury.

Cyrano [*rising*]. That old Silenus, who has not seen his knees this many a year, still believes himself a delicate desperate danger to the fair. And as he struts and burrs upon the stage, makes sheep's-eyes at them with his moist frog's-eyes. And I have hated him . . . oh, properly! . . . since the night he was so daring as to cast his glance on her . . . her, who—Oh, I thought I saw a slug crawl over a flower!

Le Bret [*amazed*]. Hey? What? Is it possible? . . .

Cyrano [*with a bitter laugh*]. That I should love? [*In a different tone, seriously.*] I love.

Le Bret. And may one know? . . . You never told me . . .

Cyrano. Whom I love? . . . Come, think a little. The dream of being beloved, even by the beautiless, is made, to me, an empty dream indeed by this good nose, my forerunner ever by a quarter of an hour. Hence, whom should I love? . . . It seems superfluous to tell you! . . . I love . . . it was inevitable! . . . the most beautiful that breathes!

Le Bret. The most beautiful? . . .

Cyrano. No less, in the whole world! And the most resplendent, and the most delicate of wit, and among the golden-haired . . . [*with overwhelming despair*]. Still the superlative!

Le Bret. Dear me, what is this fair one?

Cyrano. All unawares, a deadly snare, exquisite without concern to be so. A snare of nature's own, a musk-rose; in which ambush Love lies low. Who has seen her smile remembers the ineffable! There is not a thing so common but she turns it into prettiness; and in the merest nod or beck she can make manifest all the attributes of a goddess. No, Venus! you cannot step into your iridescent shell, nor, Dian, you, walk through the blossoming groves, as she steps into her chair and walks in Paris!

Le Bret. Sapristi! I understand! It is clear!

Cyrano. It is pellucid.

Le Bret. Magdeleine Robin, your cousin?

Cyrano. Yes, Roxane.

Le Bret. But, what could be better? You love her? Tell her so! You covered yourself with glory in her sight a moment since.

Cyrano. Look well at me, dear friend, and tell me how much hope you think can be justly entertained with this protuberance. Oh, I foster no illusions! . . . Sometimes, indeed, yes, in the violet dusk, I yield, even I! to a dreamy mood. I penetrate some garden that lies sweetening the hour. With my poor great devil of a nose I sniff the April. . . . And as I follow with my eyes some woman passing with some cavalier, I think how dear would I hold having to walk beside me, linked like that, slowly, in the soft moonlight, such a one! I kindle—I forget—and then . . . then suddenly I see the shadow of my profile upon the garden-wall!

Le Bret [*touched*]. My friend . . .

Cyrano. Friend, I experience a bad

half hour sometimes, in feeling so unsightly . . . and alone.

Le Bret [*in quick sympathy, taking his hand*]. You weep?

Cyrano. Ah, God forbid! That? Never! No, that would be unsightly to excess! That a tear should course the whole length of this nose! Never, so long as I am accountable, shall the divine loveliness of tears be implicated with so much gross ugliness! Mark me well, nothing is so holy as are tears, nothing! and never shall it be that, rousing mirth through me, a single one of them shall seem ridiculous!

Le Bret. Come, do not despond! Love is a lottery.

Cyrano [*shaking his head*]. No! I love Cleopatra: do I resemble Cæsar? I worship Berenice: do I put you in mind of Titus?

Le Bret. But your courage . . . and your wit!—The little girl who but a moment ago bestowed on you that very modest meal, her eyes, you must have seen as much, did not exactly hate you!

Cyrano [*impressed*]. That is true!

Le Bret. You see? So, then!—But Roxane herself, in following your duel, went lily-pale.

Cyrano. Lily-pale? . . .

Le Bret. Her mind, her heart as well, are struck with wonder! Be bold, speak to her, in order that she may . . .

Cyrano. Laugh in my face! . . . No, there is but one thing upon earth I fear. . . . It is that.

The Doorkeeper [*admitting the* Duenna *to* Cyrano]. Monsieur, you are inquired for.

Cyrano [*seeing the* Duenna]. Ah, my God! . . . her duenna!

The Duenna [*with a great curtsey*]. Somebody wishes to know of her valorous cousin where one may, in private, see him.

Cyrano [*upset*]. See me?

The Duenna [*with curtsey*]. See you. There are things for your ear.

Cyrano. There are . . . ?

The Duenna [*other curtsey*]. Things.

Cyrano [*staggering*]. Ah, my God! . . .

The Duenna. Somebody intends, to-morrow, at the earliest roses of the dawn, to hear Mass at Saint Roch.

Cyrano [*upholds himself by leaning on* Le Bret]. Ah, my God!

The Duenna. That over, where might one step in a moment, have a little talk?

Cyrano [*losing his senses*]. Where? . . . I . . . But . . . Ah, my God!

The Duenna. Expedition, if you please.

Cyrano. I am casting about . . .

The Duenna. Where?

Cyrano. At . . . at . . . at Ragueneau's . . . the pastrycook's.

The Duenna. He lodges?

Cyrano. In . . . In Rue . . . Ah, my God! my God! . . . St. Honoré.

The Duenna [*retiring*]. We will be there. Do not fail. At seven.

Cyrano. I will not fail. [*Exit* Duenna.]

Cyrano [*falling on* Le Bret's *neck.*] To me . . . from her . . . a meeting!

Le Bret. Well, your gloom is dispelled?

Cyrano. Ah, to whatever end it may be, she is aware of my existence!

Le Bret. And now you will be calm?

Cyrano [*beside himself*]. Now, I shall be fulminating and frenetical! I want an army all complete to put to rout! I have ten hearts and twenty arms . . . I cannot now be suited with felling dwarfs to earth. . . . [*At the top of his lungs.*] Giants are what I want!

[*During the last lines, on the stage at the back, shadowy shapes of players have been moving about. The rehearsal has begun; the fiddlers have resumed their places.*]

A Voice [*from the stage*]. Hey! Psst! Over there! A little lower. We are trying to rehearse!

Cyrano [*laughing*]. We are going!

[*He goes toward the back.*]

[*Through the street door, enter* Cuigy, Brissaille, *several* Officers *supporting* Lignière *in a state of complete intoxication.*]

Cuigy. Cyrano!

Cyrano. What is this?

Cuigy. A *turdus vinaticus* we are bringing you.

Cyrano [*recognizing him*]. Lignière! Hey, what has happened to you?

Cuigy. He is looking for you.

Brissaille. He cannot go home.

Cyrano. Why?

Lignière [*in a thick voice, showing him a bit of crumpled paper*]. This note bids me beware . . . A hundred men against

me . . . on account of lampoon . . . grave danger threatening me . . . Porte de Nesle . . . must pass it to get home. Let me come and sleep under your roof.

Cyrano. A hundred, did you say?—You shall sleep at home!

Lignière [*frightened*]. But . . .

Cyrano [*in a terrible voice, pointing to the lighted lantern which the* Doorkeeper *stands swinging as he listens to this scene*]. Take that lantern [Lignière *hurriedly takes it*] and walk! . . . I swear to tuck you in your bed to-night myself. (*To the* Officers.] You, follow at a distance. You may look on!

Cuigy. But a hundred men . . .

Cyrano. Are not one man too many for my mood to-night!

[*The players, in their several costumes, have stepped down from the stage and come nearer.*]

Le Bret. But why take under your especial care . . .

Cyrano. Still Le Bret is not satisfied!

Le Bret. That most commonplace of sots?

Cyrano [*slapping* Lignière *on the shoulder*]. Because this sot, this cask of muscatel, this hogshead of rosolio, did once upon a time a wholly pretty thing. On leaving Mass, having seen her whom he loved take holy-water, as the rite prescribes, he whom the sight of water puts to flight, ran to the holy-water bowl, and stooping over, drank it dry. . . .

An Actress [*in the costume of soubrette*]. *Tiens,* that was nice!

Cyrano. Was it not, soubrette?

The Soubrette [*to the others*]. But why are they, a hundred, all against one poor poet?

Cyrano. Let us start! [*To the* Officers.] And you, gentlemen, when you see me attack, whatever you may suppose to be my danger, do not stir to second me!

Another of the Actresses [*jumping from the stage*]. Oh, I will not miss seeing this!

Cyrano. Come!

Another Actress [*likewise jumping from the stage, to an elderly actor*]. Cassandre, will you not come?

Cyrano. Come, all of you! The Doctor, Isabel, Leander, all! and you shall lend, charming fantastic swarm, an air of Italian farce to the Spanish drama in view. Yes, you shall be a tinkling heard above a roar, like bells about a tambourine!

All the Women [*in great glee*]. Bravo! . . . Hurry! . . . A mantle! . . . A hood!

Jodelet. Let us go!

Cyrano [*to the fiddlers*]. You will favor us with a tune, messieurs the violinists!

[*The fiddlers fall into the train. The lighted candles which furnished the footlights are seized and distributed. The procession becomes a torchlight procession.*]

Cyrano. Bravo! Officers, beauty in fancy dress, and, twenty steps ahead . . . [*he takes the position he describes*]. I, by myself, under the feather stuck, with her own hand, by Glory, in my hat! Proud as a Scipio trebly Nasica!—It is understood? Formal interdiction to interfere with me!—We are ready? One! Two! Three! Doorkeeper, open the door!

[*The* Doorkeeper *opens wide the folding door. A picturesque corner of Old Paris appears, bathed in moonlight.*]

Cyrano. Ah! . . . Paris floats in dim nocturnal mist. . . . The sloping blueish roofs are washed with moonlight. . . . A setting, exquisite indeed, offers itself for the scene about to be enacted. . . . Yonder, under silvery vapor wreathes, like a mysterious magic mirror, glimmers the Seine. . . . And you shall see what you shall see!

All. To the Porte de Nesle!

Cyrano [*standing on the threshold*]. To the Porte de Nesle! [*Before crossing it, he turns to the* Soubrette.] Were you not asking, mademoiselle, why upon that solitary rhymster a hundred men were set? [*He draws his sword, and tranquilly.*] Because it was well known he is a friend of mine! [*Exit.*]

[*To the sound of the violins, by the flickering light of the candles, the procession*—Lignière *staggering at the head, the* Actresses *arm in arm with the* Officers, *the players capering behind,—follows out into the night.*]

ACT TWO

THE COOKSHOP OF POETS

RAGUENEAU'S *shop, vast kitchen at the corner of Rue St. Honoré and Rue de l'Arbre-Sec, which can be seen at the back, through the glass door, gray in the early dawn.*

At the left, in front, a counter overhung by a wrought-iron canopy from which geese, ducks, white peacocks are hanging. In large china jars, tall nosegays composed of the simpler flowers, mainly sunflowers. On the same side, in the middle distance, an enormous fireplace, in front of which, between huge andirons, each of which supports a small iron pot, roasting meats drip into appropriate pans.

At the right, door in the front wing. In the middle distance, a staircase leading to a loft, the interior of which is seen through open shutters; a spread table lighted by a small Flemish candelabrum, shows it to be an eating-room. A wooden gallery continuing the stairway, suggests other similar rooms to which it may lead.

In the centre of the shop, an iron hoop—which can be lowered by means of a rope,—to which large roasts are hooked.

In the shadow, under the stairway, ovens are glowing. Copper molds and saucepans are shining; spits turning, hams swinging, pastry pyramids showing fair. It is the early beginning of the workday. Bustling of hurried scullions, portly cooks and young cook's-assistants; swarming of caps decorated with hen feathers and guinea-fowl wings. Wicker crates and broad sheets of tin are brought in loaded with brioches and tarts.

There are tables covered with meats and cakes; others, surrounded by chairs, await customers. In a corner, a smaller table, littered with papers. At the rise of the curtain, RAGUENEAU *is discovered seated at this table, writing with an inspired air, and counting upon his fingers.*

First Pastrycook [*bringing in a tall molded pudding*]. Nougat of fruit!

Second Pastrycook [*bringing in the dish he names*]. Custard!

Third Pastrycook [*bringing in a fowl roasted in its feathers*]. Peacock!

Fourth Pastrycook [*bringing in a tray of cakes*]. Mince-pies!

Fifth Pastrycook [*bringing in a deep earthen dish*]. Beef stew!

Ragueneau [*laying down his pen, and looking up*]. Daybreak already plates with silver the copper pans! Time, Ragueneau, to smother within thee the singing divinity! The hour of the lute will come anon—now is that of the ladle! [*He rises; speaking to one of the cooks.*] You, sir, be so good as to lengthen this gravy,—it is too thick!

The Cook. How much?

Ragueneau. Three feet. [*Goes farther.*]

The Cook. What does he mean?

First Pastrycook. Let me have the tart!

Second Pastrycook. The dumpling!

Ragueneau [*standing before the fireplace*]. Spread thy wings, Muse, and fly further, that thy lovely eyes may not be reddened at the sordid kitchen fire! [*To one of the cooks, pointing at some small loaves of bread.*] You have improperly placed the cleft in those loaves; the cæsura belongs in the middle,—between the hemistichs! [*To another of the* COOKS, *pointing at an unfinished pastry.*] This pastry palace requires a roof! [*To a young cook's apprentice, who, seated upon the floor, is putting fowls on a spit.*] And you, on that long spit, arrange, my son, in pleasing alternation, the modest pullet and the splendid turkey-cock,—even as our wise Malherbe alternated of old the greater with the lesser lines, and so with roasted fowls compose a poem!

Another Apprentice [*coming forward with a platter covered by a napkin*]. Master, in your honor, see what I have baked. . . . I hope you are pleased with it!

Ragueneau [*ecstatic*]. A lyre!

The Apprentice. Of pie-crust!

Ragueneau [*touched*]. With candied fruits!

The Apprentice. And the strings, see,—of spun sugar!

Ragueneau [*giving him money*]. Go, drink my health! [*Catching sight of* LISE *who is entering.*] Hush! My wife! . . . Move on, and hide that money. [*To* LISE, *showing her the lyre, with a constrained air.*] Fine, is it not?

Lise. Ridiculous! [*She sets a pile of wrapping-paper on the counter.*]

Ragueneau. Paper bags? Good. Thanks. [*He examines them.*] Heavens! My beloved books! The masterpieces of my friends,—dismembered,—torn!—to fashion paper bags for penny pies!—Ah, the abominable case is re-enacted of Orpheus and the Mænads!

Lise [*drily*]. And have I not an unquestionable right to make what use I can of the sole payment ever got from your paltry scribblers of uneven lines?

Ragueneau. Pismire! Forbear to insult those divine, melodious crickets!

Lise. Before frequenting that low crew, my friend, you did not use to call me a Mænad,—no, nor yet a pismire!

Ragueneau. Put poems to such a use!

Lise. To that use and no other!

Ragueneau. If with poems you do this, I should like to know, Madame, what you do with prose!

[*Two children have come into the shop.*]

Ragueneau. What can I do for you, little ones?

First Child. Three patties.

Ragueneau [*waiting on them*]. There you are! Beautifully browned, and piping hot.

Second Child. Please, will you wrap them for us?

Ragueneau [*starting, aside*]. There goes one of my bags! [*To the children.*] You want them wrapped, do you? [*He takes one of the paper bags, and as he is about to put in the patties, reads.*] *"No otherwise, Ulysses, from Penelope departing. . . ."* Not this one! [*He lays it aside and takes another. At the moment of putting in the patties, he reads.*] *"Phœbus of the aureate locks . . ."* Not that one! [*Same business.*]

Lise [*out of patience*]. Well, what are you waiting for?

Ragueneau. Here we are. Here we are. Here we are. [*He takes a third bag and resigns himself.*] The sonnet to Phyllis! . . . It is hard, all the same.

Lise. It is lucky you made up your mind. [*Shrugging her shoulders.*] Nicodemus!

[*She climbs on a chair and arranges dishes on a sideboard.*]

Ragueneau [*taking advantage of her back being turned, calls back the children who had already reached the door*]. Psst! . . . Children! Give me back the sonnet to Phyllis, and you shall have six patties instead of three! [*The children give back the paper-bag, joyfully take the patties and exeunt.* RAGUENEAU *smoothes out the crumpled paper and reads declaiming.*] *"Phyllis!"* . . . Upon that charming name, a grease-spot! . . . *"Phyllis!"* . . .

[*Enter* CYRANO *brusquely.*]

Cyrano. What time is it?

Ragueneau [*bowing with eager deference*]. Six o'clock.

Cyrano [*with emotion*]. In an hour! [*He comes and goes in the shop.*]

Ragueneau [*following him*]. Bravo! I too was witness . . .

Cyrano. Of what?

Ragueneau. Your fight.

Cyrano. Which?

Ragueneau. At the Hotel de Bourgogne.

Cyrano [*with disdain*]. Ah, the duel!

Ragueneau [*admiringly*]. Yes,—the duel in rhyme.

Lise. He can talk of nothing else.

Cyrano. Let him! . . . It does no harm.

Ragueneau [*thrusting with a spit he has seized*]. *"At the last line, I hit!" "At the last line I hit!"*—How fine that is! [*With growing enthusiasm.*] *"At the last line, I"*—

Cyrano. What time, Ragueneau?

Ragueneau [*remaining fixed in the attitude of thrusting, while he looks at the clock*]. Five minutes past six.—*"I hit!"* [*He recovers from his duelling posture.*] Oh, to be able to make a ballade!

Lise [*to* CYRANO, *who in passing her counter has absentmindedly shaken hands with her*]. What ails your hand?

Cyrano. Nothing. A scratch.

Ragueneau. You have been exposed to some danger?

Cyrano. None whatever.

Lise [*shaking her finger at him*]. I fear that is a fib!

Cyrano. From the swelling of my nose? The fib in that case must have been good-sized. . . . [*In a different tone.*] I am expecting some one. You will leave us alone in here.

Ragueneau. But how can I contrive it? My poets shortly will be coming . . .

Lise [*ironically*]. For breakfast!

Cyrano. When I sign to you, you will clear the place of them.—What time is it?

Ragueneau. It is ten minutes past six.

Cyrano [*seating himself nervously at* RAGUENEAU'S *table and helping himself to paper*]. A pen?

Ragueneau [*taking one from behind his ear, and offering it*]. A swan's quill.

A Mousquetaire [*with enormous moustachios, enters; in a stentorian voice*]. Good-morning!

[LISE *goes hurriedly to him, toward the back.*]

Cyrano [*turning*]. What is it?

Ragueneau. A friend of my wife's,—a warrior,—terrible, from his own report.

Cyrano [*taking up the pen again, and waving* RAGUENEAU *away*]. Hush! . . . [*To himself.*] Write to her, . . . fold the letter, . . . hand it to her, . . . and make my escape. . . . [*Throwing down the pen.*] Coward! . . . But may I perish if I have the courage to speak to her, . . . to say a single word. . . . [*To* RAGUENEAU.] What time is it?

RAGUENEAU. A quarter past six.

Cyrano [*beating his breast*]. A single word of all I carry here! . . . Whereas in writing . . . [*He takes up the pen again.*] Come, let us write it then, in very deed, the love-letter I have written in thought so many times, I have but to lay my soul beside my paper, and copy! [*He writes.*]

[*Beyond the glass door, shadowy lank hesitating shabby forms are seen moving.*]

[*Enter the* POETS, *clad in black, with hanging hose, sadly mud-splashed.*]

Lise [*coming forward, to* RAGUENEAU]. Here they come, your scarecrows!

First Poet [*entering, to* RAGUENEAU]. Brother in art! . . .

Second Poet [*shaking both* RAGUENEAU'S *hands*]. Dear fellow-bard. . . .

Third Poet. Eagle of pastrycooks, [*sniffs the air*], your eyrie smells divine!

Fourth Poet. Phœbus turned baker!

Fifth Poet. Apollo master-cook!

Ragueneau [*surrounded, embraced, shaken by the hand*]. How at his ease a man feels at once with them!

First Poet. The reason we are late, is the crowd at the Porte de Nesle!

Second Poet. Eight ugly ruffians, ripped open with the sword, lie weltering on the pavement.

Cyrano [*raising his head a second*]. Eight? I thought there were only seven. [*Goes on with his letter.*]

Ragueneau [*to* CYRANO]. Do you happen to know who is the hero of this event?

Cyrano [*negligently*]. I? . . . No.

Lise [*to the* MOUSQUETAIRE]. Do you?

The Mousquetaire [*turning up the ends of his moustache*]. Possibly!

Cyrano [*writing; from time to time he is heard murmuring a word or two*]. . . . "I love you . . ."

First Poet. A single man, we were told, put a whole gang to flight!

Second Poet. Oh, it was a rare sight! The ground was littered with pikes, and cudgels . . .

Cyrano [*writing*]. . . . "*Your eyes . . .*"

Third Poet. Hats were strewn as far as the Goldsmiths' square!

First Poet. Sapristi! He must have been a madman of mettle. . . .

Cyrano [*as above*]. "*. . . your lips . . .*"

First Poet. An infuriate giant, the doer of that deed!

Cyrano [*same business*]. "*. . . but when I see you, I come near to swooning with a tender dread . . .*"

Second Poet [*snapping up a tart*]. What have you lately written, Ragueneau?

Cyrano [*same business*]. "*. . . who loves you devotedly . . .*" [*In the act of signing the letter, he stops, rises, and tucks it inside his doublet.*] No need to sign it. I deliver it myself.

Ragueneau [*to* SECOND POET]. I have rhymed a recipe.

Third Poet [*establishing himself beside a tray of cream puffs*]. Let us hear this recipe!

Fourth Poet [*examining a brioche of which he has possessed himself*]. It should not wear its cap so saucily on one side . . . it scarcely looks well! . . . [*Bites off the top.*]

First Poet. See, the spice-cake there, ogling a susceptible poet with eyes of almond under citron brows! . . . [*He takes the spice cake.*]

Second Poet. We are listening!

Third Poet [*slightly squeezing a cream puff between his fingers*]. This puff creams at the mouth. . . . I water!

Second Poet [*taking a bite out of the large pastry lyre*]. For once the Lyre will have filled my stomach!

Ragueneau [*who has made ready to recite, has coughed, adjusted his cap, struck an attitude*]. A recipe in rhyme!

Second Poet [*to* First Poet, *nudging him*]. Is it breakfast, with you?

First Poet [*to* Second Poet]. And with you, is it dinner?

Ragueneau. How Almond Cheese-Cakes should be made.

Briskly beat to lightness due,
Eggs, a few;
With the eggs so beaten, beat—
Nicely strained for this same use,—
Lemon-juice,
Adding milk of almonds, sweet.

With fine pastry dough, rolled flat,
After that,
Line each little scalloped mold;
Round the sides, light-fingered, spread
Marmalade;
Pour the liquid eggy gold,

Into each delicious pit;
Prison it
In the oven,—and, bye and bye,
Almond cheese-cakes will in gay
Blond array
Bless your nostril and your eye!

The Poets [*their mouths full*]. Exquisite! . . . Delicious!

One of the Poets [*choking*]. Humph!

[*They go toward the back, eating.* Cyrano, *who has been watching them, approaches* Ragueneau.]

Cyrano. While you recite your works to them, have you a notion how they stuff?

Ragueneau [*low, with a smile*]. Yes, I see them . . . without looking, lest they should be abashed. I get a double pleasure thus from saying my verses over: I satisfy a harmless weakness of which I stand convicted, at the same time as giving those who have not fed a needed chance to feed!

Cyrano [*slapping him on the shoulder*]. You, . . . I like you! [Ragueneau *joins his friends.* Cyrano *looks after him; then, somewhat sharply.*] Hey, Lise! [Lise, *absorbed in tender conversation with the* Mousquetaire, *starts and comes forward toward* Cyrano.] Is that captain . . . laying siege to you?

Lise [*offended*]. My eyes, sir, have ever held in respect those who meant hurt to my character. . . .

Cyrano. For eyes so resolute . . . I thought yours looked a little lanquishing!

Lise [*choking with anger*]. But . . .

Cyrano [*bluntly*]. I like your husband. Wherefore, Madame Lise, I say he shall not be sc . . . horned!

Lise. But . . .

Cyrano [*raising his voice so as to be heard by the* Mousquetaire]. A word to the wise! [*He bows to the* Mousquetaire, *and after looking at the clock, goes to the door at the back and stands in watch.*]

Lise [*to the* Mousquetaire, *who has simply returned* Cyrano's *bow*]. Really . . . I am astonished at you. . . . Defy him . . . to his face!

The Mousquetaire. To his face, indeed! . . . to his face! . . . [*He quickly moves off.* Lise *follows him.*]

Cyrano [*from the door at the back, signalling to* Ragueneau *that he should clear the room*]. Pst! . . .

Ragueneau [*urging the* Poets *toward the door at the right*]. We shall be much more comfortable in there. . . .

Cyrano [*impatiently*]. Pst! . . . Pst! . . .

Ragueneau [*driving along the* Poets]. I want to read you a little thing of mine. . . .

First Poet [*despairingly, his mouth full*]. But the provisions. . . .

Second Poet. Shall not be parted from us!

[*They follow* Ragueneau *in procession, after making a raid on the eatables.*]

Cyrano. If I feel that there is so much as a glimmer of hope . . . I will out with my letter! . . .

[Roxane, *masked, appears behind the glass door, followed by the* Duenna.]

Cyrano [*instantly opening the door*]. Welcome! [*Approaching the* Duenna.] Madame, a word with you!

The Duenna. A dozen.

Cyrano. Are you fond of sweets?

The Duenna. To the point of indigestion!

Cyrano [*snatching some paper bags off*

the counter]. Good. Here are two sonnets of Benserade's . . .

The Duenna. Pooh!

Cyrano. Which I fill for you with grated almond drops.

The Duenna [*with a different expression*]. Ha!

Cyrano. Do you look with favor upon the cake they call a trifle?

The Duenna. I affect it out of measure, when it has whipped cream inside.

Cyrano. Six shall be yours, thrown in with a poem by Saint-Amant. And in these verses of Chapelain I place this wedge of fruit-cake, light by the side of them. . . . Oh! And do you like tarts . . . little jam ones . . . fresh?

The Duenna. I dream of them at night!

Cyrano [*loading her arms with crammed paper bags*]. Do me the favor to go and eat these in the street.

The Duenna. But . . .

Cyrano [*pushing her out*]. And do not come back till you have finished! [*He closes the door upon her, comes forward toward* ROXANE, *and stands, bareheaded, at a respectful distance.*] Blessed forevermore among all hours the hour in which, remembering that so lowly a being still draws breath, you were so gracious as to come to tell me . . . to tell me? . . .

Roxane [*who has removed her mask*]. First of all, that I thank you. For that churl, that coxcomb yesterday, whom you taught manners with your sword, is the one whom a great nobleman, who fancies himself in love with me . . .

Cyrano. De Guiche?

Roxane [*dropping her eyes*]. Has tried to force upon me as a husband.

Cyrano. Honorary? [*Bowing.*] It appears, then, that I fought, and I am glad of it, not for my graceless nose but your thrice-beautiful eyes.

Roxane. Further than that . . . I wished . . . But before I can make the confession I have in mind to make, I must find in you once more the . . . almost brother, with whom as a child I used to play, in the park —do you remember?—by the lake!

Cyrano. I have not forgotten. Yes . . . you came every summer to Bergerac.

Roxane. You used to fashion lances out of reeds . . .

Cyrano. The silk of the tasselled corn furnished hair for your doll . . .

Roxane. It was the time of long delightful games . . .

Cyrano. And somewhat sour berries . . .

Roxane. The time when you did everything I bade you!

Cyrano. Roxane, wearing short frocks, was known as Magdeleine.

Roxane. Was I pretty in those days?

Cyrano. You were not ill-looking.

Roxane. Sometimes, in your venturesome climbings you used to hurt yourself. You would come running to me, your hand bleeding. And, playing at being your mamma, I would harden my voice and say . . . [*She takes his hand.*] "Will you never keep out of mischief?" [*She stops short, amazed.*] Oh, it is too much! Here you have done it again! [CYRANO *tries to draw back his hand.*] No! Let me look at it! . . . Aren't you ashamed? A great boy like you! . . . How did this happen, and where?

Cyrano. Oh, fun . . . near the Porte de Nesle.

Roxane [*sitting down at a table and dipping her handkerchief into a glass of water*]. Let me have it.

Cyrano [*sitting down too*]. So prettily, so cheeringly maternal!

Roxane. And tell me, while I wash this naughty blood away . . . with how many were you fighting?

Cyrano. Oh, not quite a hundred.

Roxane. Tell me about it.

Cyrano. No. What does it matter? You tell me, you . . . what you were going to tell me before, and did not dare . . .

Roxane [*without releasing his hand*]. I do dare, now. I have breathed in courage with the perfume of the past. Oh, yes, now I dare. Here it is. There is some one whom I love.

Cyrano. Ah! . . .

Roxane. Oh, he does not know it.

Cyrano. Ah! . . .

Roxane. As yet. . . .

Cyrano. Ah! . . .

Roxane. But if he does not know it, he soon will.

Cyrano. Ah! . . .

Roxane. A poor boy who until now has loved me timidly, from a distance, without daring to speak. . . .

Cyrano. Ah! . . .

Roxane. No, leave me your hand. It is hot, this will cool it. . . . But I have read his heart in his face.

Cyrano. Ah! . . .

Roxane [*completing the bandaging of his hand with her small pocket-handkerchief*]. And, cousin, is it not a strange coincidence — that he should serve exactly in your regiment!

Cyrano. Ah! . . .

Roxane [*laughing*]. Yes. He is a cadet, in the same company!

Cyrano. Ah! . . .

Roxane. He bears plain on his forehead the stamp of wit, of genius! He is proud, noble, young, brave, handsome. . . .

Cyrano [*rising, pale*]. Handsome! . . .

Roxane. What . . . what is the matter?

Cyrano. With me? . . . Nothing! . . . It is . . . it is . . . [*Showing his hand, smiling.*] You know! . . . It smarts a little . . .

Roxane. In short, I love him. I must tell you, however, that I have never seen him save at the play.

Cyrano. Then you have never spoken to each other?

Roxane. Only with our eyes.

Cyrano. But, then . . . how can you know? . . .

Roxane. Oh, under the lindens of Place Royale, people will talk. A trustworthy gossip told me many things!

Cyrano. A cadet, did you say?

Roxane. A cadet, in your company.

Cyrano. His name?

Roxane. Baron Christian de Neuvillette.

Cyrano. What? He is not in the cadets.

Roxane. He is! He certainly is, since morning. Captain Carbon de Castel-Jaloux.

Cyrano. And quickly, quickly, she throws away her heart! . . . But my poor little girl . . .

The Duenna [*opening the door at the back*]. Monsieur de Bergerac, I have eaten them, every one!

Cyrano. Now read the poetry printed upon the bags! [*The* DUENNA *disappears.*] My poor child, you who can endure none but the choicest language, who savor eloquence and wit, . . . if he should be a barbarian!

Roxane. No! no! . . . He has hair like one of D'Urfé's heroes!

Cyrano. If he had on proof as homely a wit as he has pretty hair!

Roxane. No! No! . . . I can see at a single glance, his utterances are fine, pointed . . .

Cyrano. Ah, yes! A man's utterances are invariably like his moustache! . . . Still, if he *were* a ninny? . . .

Roxane [*stamping with her foot*]. I should die, there!

Cyrano [*after a time*]. You bade me come here that you might tell me this? I scarcely see the appropriateness, madame.

Roxane. Ah, it was because some one yesterday let death into my soul by telling me that in your company you are all Gascons, . . . all!

Cyrano. And that we pick a quarrel with every impudent fledgling, not Gascon, admitted by favor to our thoroughbred Gascon ranks? That is what you heard?

Roxane. Yes, and you can imagine how distracted I am for him!

Cyrano [*in his teeth*]. You well may be!

Roxane. But I thought, yesterday, when you towered up, great and invincible, giving his due to that miscreant, standing your ground against those caitiffs, I thought "Were he but willing, he of whom all are in awe . . . "

Cyrano. Very well, I will protect your little baron.

Roxane. Ah, you will . . . you will protect him for me? . . . I have always felt for you the tenderest regard!

Cyrano. Yes, yes.

Roxane. You will be his friend?

Cyrano. I will!

Roxane. And never shall he have to fight a duel?

Cyrano. I swear it.

Roxane. Oh, I quite love you! . . . Now I must go. [*She hurriedly resumes her mask, throws a veil over her head; says absentmindedly.*] But you have not yet told me about last night's encounter. It must have been amazing! . . . Tell him to write to me. [*She kisses her hand to him.*] I love you dearly!

Cyrano. Yes, yes.

Roxane. A hundred men against you? . . . Well, adieu. We are fast friends.

Cyrano. Yes, yes.

Roxane. Tell him to write me! . . . A hundred men! You shall tell me another

time. I must not linger now . . . A hundred men! What a heroic thing to do!

Cyrano [*bowing*]. Oh, I have done better since!

[*Exit* ROXANE. CYRANO *stands motionless, staring at the ground. Silence. The door at the right opens.* RAGUENEAU *thrusts in his head.*]

Ragueneau. May we come back?

Cyrano [*without moving*]. Yes . . .

[RAGUENEAU *beckons, his friends come in again. At the same time, in the doorway at the back, appears* CARBON DE CASTEL-JALOUX, *costume of a Captain of the Guards. On seeing* CYRANO, *he gesticulates exaggeratedly by way of signal to some one out of sight.*]

Carbon de Castel-Jaloux. He is here!

Cyrano [*looking up*]. Captain!

Carbon de Castel-Jaloux [*exultant*]. Hero! We know all! . . . About thirty of my cadets are out there! . . .

Cyrano [*drawing back*]. But . . .

Carbon de Castel-Jaloux [*trying to lead him off*]. Come! . . . You are in request!

Cyrano. No!

Carbon de Castel-Jaloux. They are drinking across the way, at the Cross of the Hilt.

Cyrano. I . . .

Carbon de Castel-Jaloux [*going to the door and shouting toward the street corner, in a voice of thunder*]. The hero refuses. He is not in the humor!

A Voice [*outside*]. Ah, *sandious!* . . .

[*Tumult outside, noise of clanking swords and of boots drawing nearer.*]

Carbon de Castel-Jaloux [*rubbing his hands*]. Here they come, across the street. . . .

The Cadets [*entering the cookshop*]. *Mille dious! . . . Capdedious! . . . Mordious! . . . Pocapdedious! . . .*

Ragueneau [*backing in alarm*]. Messieurs, are you all natives of Gascony?

The Cadets. All!

One of the Cadets [*to* CYRANO]. Bravo!

Cyrano. Baron!

Other Cadet [*shaking both* CYRANO'S *hands*]. Vivat!

Cyrano. Baron!

Third Cadet. Let me hug you to my heart!

Cyrano. Baron!

Several Gascons. Let us hug him!

Cyrano [*not knowing which one to answer*]. Baron! . . . baron! . . . your pardon!

Ragueneau. Messieurs, are you all barons?

The Cadets. All!

Ragueneau. Are they truly?

First Cadet. Our coats of arms piled up would dwindle in the clouds!

Le Bret [*entering, running to* CYRANO]. They are looking for you! A crowd, gone mad as March, led by those who were with you last night.

Cyrano [*alarmed*]. You never told them where to find me? . . .

Le Bret [*rubbing his hands*]. I did.

A Burgher [*entering, followed by a number of others*]. Monsieur, the Marais is coming in a body!

[*The street outside has filled with people. Sedan-chairs, coaches stop before the door.*]

Le Bret [*smiling, low to* CYRANO]. And Roxane?

Cyrano [*quickly*]. Be quiet!

The Crowd [*outside*]. Cyrano!

[*A rabble bursts into the cookshop. Confusion. Shouting.*]

Ragueneau [*standing upon a table*]. My shop is invaded! They are breaking everything! It is glorious!

People [*pressing round* CYRANO]. My friend . . . my friend. . . .

Cyrano. I had not so many friends . . . yesterday!

Le Bret. This is success!

A Young Marquis [*running toward* CYRANO, *with outstretched hands*]. If you knew, my dear fellow . . .

Cyrano. Dear? . . . Fellow? . . . Where was it we stood sentinel together?

Other Marquis. I wish to present you, sir, to several ladies, who are outside in my coach. . . .

Cyrano [*coldly*]. But you, to me, by whom will you first be presented?

Le Bret [*astonished*]. But what is the matter with you?

Cyrano. Be still!

A Man of Letters [*with an inkhorn*]. Will you kindly favor me with the details of . . .

Cyrano. No.

Le Bret [*nudging him*]. That is Theophrastus Renaudot, the inventor of the gazette.

Cyrano. Enough!

Le Bret. A sheet close packed with various information! It is an idea, they say, likely to take firm root and flourish!

A Poet [*coming forward*]. Monsieur . . .

Cyrano. Another!

The Poet. I am anxious to make a pentacrostic on your name.

Somebody Else [*likewise approaching* CYRANO]. Monsieur . . .

Cyrano. Enough, I say!

[*At the gesture of impatience which* CYRANO *cannot repress, the crowd draws away.*]

[DE GUICHE *appears, escorted by officers; among them* CUIGY, BRISSAILLE, *those who followed* CYRANO *at the end of the first act.* CUIGY *hurries toward* CYRANO.]

Cuigy [*to* CYRANO]. Monsieur de Guiche! [*Murmurs. Every one draws back.*] He comes at the request of the Marshal de Gaussion.

De Guiche [*bowing to* CYRANO]. Who wishes to express his admiration for your latest exploit, the fame of which has reached him.

The Crowd. Bravo!

Cyrano [*bowing*]. The Marshal is qualified to judge of courage.

De Guiche. He would scarcely have believed the report, had these gentlemen not been able to swear they had seen the deed performed.

Cuigy. With our own eyes!

Le Bret [*low to* CYRANO, *who wears an abstracted air*]. But . . .

Cyrano. Be silent!

Le Bret. You appear to be suffering . . .

Cyrano [*starting, and straightening himself*]. Before these people? . . . [*His moustache bristles; he expands his chest.*] I . . . suffering? . . . You shall see!

De Guiche [*in whose ear* CUIGY *has been whispering*]. But this is by no means the first gallant achievement marking your career. You serve in the madcap Gascon company, do you not?

Cyrano. In the cadets, yes.

One of the Cadets [*in a great voice*]. Among his countrymen!

De Guiche [*considering the* GASCONS, *in line behind* CYRANO]. Ah, ha! — All these gentlemen, then, of the formidable aspect, are the famous . . .

Carbon de Castel-Jaloux. Cyrano!

Cyrano. Captain? . . .

Carbon de Castel-Jaloux. My company, I believe, is here in total. Be so obliging as to present it to the Count.

Cyrano [*taking a step toward* DE GUICHE, *and pointing at the* CADETS].

They are the Gascony Cadets
Of Carbon de Castel-Jaloux;
Famed fighters, liars, desperates,
They are the Gascony Cadets!
All, better-born than pickpockets,
Talk couchant, rampant, . . . pendent, too!
They are the Gascony Cadets
Of Carbon de Castel-Jaloux!

Cat-whiskered, eyed like falconets,
Wolf-toothed and heron-legged, they hew
The rabble down that snarls and threats . . .
Cat-whiskered, eyed like falconets,
Great pomp of plume hides and offsets
Holes in those hats they wear askew . . .
Cat-whiskered, eyed like falconets,
They drive the snarling mob, and hew!

The mildest of their sobriquets
Are Crack-my-crown and Run-me-through,
Mad drunk on glory Gascon gets!
These boasters of soft sobriquets
Wherever rapier rapier whets
Are met in punctual rendezvous. . . .
The mildest of their sobriquets
Are Crack-my-crown and Run-me-through!

They are the Gascony Cadets
That give the jealous spouse his due!
Lean forth, adorable coquettes,
They are the Gascony Cadets,
With plumes and scarfs and aiguletsl
The husband gray may well look blue. . . .
They are the Gascony Cadets
That give the jealous spouse his due!

De Guiche [*nonchalantly seated in an armchair which* RAGUENEAU *has hurriedly brought for him*]. A gentleman provides himself to-day, by way of luxury, with a poet. May I look upon you as mine?

Cyrano. No, your lordship, as nobody's.

De Guiche. My uncle Richelieu yester-

day found your spontaneity diverting. I shall be pleased to be of use to you with him.

Le Bret [*dazzled*]. Great God!

De Guiche. I cannot think I am wrong in supposing that you have rhymed a tragedy?

Le Bret [*whispering to* CYRANO]. My boy, your Agrippina will be played!

De Guiche. Take it to him. . . .

Cyrano [*tempted and pleased*]. Really. . . .

De Guiche. He has taste in such matters. He will no more than, here and there, alter a word, recast a passage. . . .

Cyrano [*whose face has instantly darkened*]. Not to be considered, monsieur! My blood runs cold at the thought of a single comma added or suppressed.

De Guiche. On the other hand, my dear sir, when a verse finds favor with him, he pays for it handsomely.

Cyrano. He scarcely can pay me as I pay myself, when I have achieved a verse to my liking, by singing it over to myself!

De Guiche. You are proud.

Cyrano. You have observed it?

One of the Cadets [*coming in with a number of disreputable, draggled, tattered hats threaded on his sword*]. Look, Cyrano! at the remarkable feathered game we secured this morning near the Porte de Nesle! The hats of the fugitives!

Carbon de Castel-Jaloux. Spoliæ opimæ!

All [*laughing*]. Ha! Ha! Ha! . . .

Cuigy. The one who planned that military action, my word! must be proud of it to-day!

Brissaille. Is it known who did it?

De Guiche. I—[*The laughter stops short.*] They had instructions to chastise—a matter one does not attend to in person,—a drunken scribbler.

[*Constrained silence.*]

The Cadet [*under breath, to* CYRANO, *indicating the hats*]. What can we do with them? They are oily. . . . Make them into a hotch pot?

Cyrano [*taking the sword with the hats, and bowing, as he shakes them off at* DE GUICHE'S *feet*]. Monsieur, if you should care to return them to your friends? . . .

De Guiche [*rises, and in a curt tone*]. My chair and bearers, at once. [*To* CYRANO, *violently.*] As for you, sir . . .

A Voice [*in the street, shouting*]. The chairmen of Monseigneur the Comte de Guiche!

De Guiche [*who has recovered control over himself, with a smile*]. Have you read Don Quixote?

Cyrano. I have. And at the name of that divine madman, I uncover . . .

De Guiche. My advice to you is to ponder . . .

A Chairman [*appearing at the back*]. The chair is at the door!

De Guiche. The chapter of the wind mills.

Cyrano [*bowing*]. Chapter thirteen.

De Guiche. For when a man attacks them, it often happens . . .

Cyrano. I have attacked, am I to infer, a thing that veers with every wind?

De Guiche. That one of their far-reaching canvas arms pitches him down into the mud!

Cyrano. Or up among the stars!

[*Exit* DE GUICHE. *He is seen getting into his chair. The gentlemen withdraw whispering.* LE BRET *goes to the door with them. The crowd leaves. The* CADETS *remain seated at the right and left at tables where food and drink is brought to them.*]

Cyrano [*bowing with a derisive air to those who leave without daring to take leave of him*]. Gentlemen . . . gentlemen . . . gentlemen . . .

Le Bret [*coming forward, greatly distressed, lifting his hands to Heaven*]. Oh, in what a pretty pair of shoes . . .

Cyrano. Oh, you! . . . I expect you to grumble!

Le Bret. But yourself, you will agree with me that invariably to cut the throat of opportunity becomes an exaggeration! . . .

Cyrano. Yes. I agree. I do exaggerate.

Le Bret [*triumphant*]. You see, you admit it! . . .

Cyrano. But for the sake of principle, and of example, as well, I think it a good thing to exaggerate as I do!

Le Bret. Could you but leave apart, once in a while, your mousquetaire of a soul, fortune, undoubtedly, fame . . .

Cyrano. And what should a man do? Seek some grandee, take him for patron, and like the obscure creeper clasping a

tree-trunk, and licking the bark of that which props it up, attain to height by craft instead of strength? No, I thank you. Dedicate, as they all do, poems to financiers? Wear motley in the humble hope of seeing the lips of a minister distend for once in a smile not ominous of ill? No, I thank you. Eat every day a toad? Be threadbare at the belly with grovelling? Have his skin dirty soonest at the knees? Practice feats of dorsal elasticity? No, I thank you. With one hand stroke the goat while with the other he waters the cabbage? Make gifts of senna that countergifts of rhubarb may accrue, and indefatigably swing his censer in some beard? No, I thank you. Push himself from lap to lap, become a little great man in a great little circle, propel his ship with madrigals for oars and in his sails the sighs of the elderly ladies? No, I thank you. Get the good editor Sercy to print his verses at proper expense? No, I thank you. Contrive to be nominated Pope in conclaves held by imbeciles in wineshops? No, I thank you. Work to construct a name upon the basis of a sonnet, instead of constructing other sonnets? No, I thank you. Discover talent in tyros, and in them alone? Stand in terror of what gazettes may please to say, and say to himself, "At whatever cost, may I figure in the Paris Mercury!" No, I thank you. Calculate, cringe, peak, prefer making a call to a poem, — petition, solicit, apply? No, I thank you! No, I thank you! No, I thank you! But . . . sing, dream, laugh, loaf, be single, be free, have eyes that look squarely, a voice with a ring; wear, if he chooses, his hat hindside afore; for a yes, for a no, fight a duel or turn a ditty! . . . Work, without concern of fortune or of glory, to accomplish the heart's-desired journey to the moon! Put forth nothing that has not its spring in the very heart, yet, modest, say to himself, "Old man, be satisfied with blossoms, fruits, yea, leaves alone, so they be gathered in your garden and not another man's!" Then, if it happen that to some small extent he triumph, be obliged to render of the glory, to Cæsar, not one jot, but honestly appropriate it all. In short, scorning to be the parasite, the creeper, if even failing to be the oak, rise, not perchance to a great height, . . . but rise alone!

Le Bret. Alone? Good! but not one against all! How the devil did you contract the mania that possesses you for making enemies, always, everywhere?

Cyrano. By seeing you make friends, and smile to those same flocks of friends with a mouth that takes for model an old purse! I wish not to be troubled to return bows in the street, and I exclaim with glee, "An enemy the more!"

Le Bret. This is mental aberration!

Cyrano. I do not dispute it. I am so framed. To displease is my pleasure. I love that one should hate me. Dear friend, if you but knew how much better a man walks under the exciting fire of hostile eyes, and how amused he may become over the spots on his doublet, spattered by Envy and Cowardice! . . . You, the facile friendship wherewith you surround yourself, resembles those wide Italian collars, loose and easy, with a perforated pattern, in which the neck looks like a woman's. They are more comfortable, but of less high effect; for the brow not held in proud position by any constraint from them, falls to nodding this way and that. . . . But for me every day Hatred starches and flutes the ruff whose stiffness holds the head well in place. Every new enemy is another plait in it, adding compulsion, but adding, as well, a ray: for, similar in every point to the Spanish ruff, Hatred is a bondage, . . . but is a halo, too!

Le Bret [*after a pause, slipping his arm through* CYRANO'S]. To the hearing of all be proud and bitter, . . . but to me, below breath, say simply that she does not love you!

Cyrano [*sharply*]. Not a word!

[CHRISTIAN *has come in and mingled with the* CADETS; *they ignore him; he has finally gone to a little table by himself, where* LISE *waits on him.*]

One of the Cadets [*seated at a table at the back, glass in hand*]. Hey, Cyrano! [CYRANO *turns toward him.*] Your story!

Cyrano. Presently!

[*He goes toward the back on* LE BRET'S *arm. They talk low.*]

The Cadet [*rising and coming toward the front*]. The account of your fight! It will be the best lesson [*stopping in front of*

the table at which CHRISTIAN *is sitting*] for this timorous novice!

Christian [*looking up*]. . . . Novice?

Other Cadet. Yes, sickly product of the North!

Christian. Sickly?

First Cadet [*impressively*]. Monsieur de Neuvillette, it is a good deed to warn you that there is a thing no more to be mentioned in our company than rope in the house of the hanged!

Christian. And what is it?

Other Cadet [*in a terrifying voice*]. Look at me! [*Three times, darkly, he places his finger upon his nose.*] You have understood?

Christian. Ah, it is the . . . .

Other Cadet. Silence! . . . Never must you so much as breathe that word, or . . . [*He points toward* CYRANO *at the back talking with* LE BRET.] You will have him, over there, to deal with!

Other Cadet [*who while* CHRISTIAN *was turned toward the first, has noiselessly seated himself on the table behind him*]. Two persons were lately cut off in their pride by him for talking through their noses. He thought it personal.

Other Cadet [*in a cavernous voice, as he rises from under the table where he had slipped on all fours*]. Not the remotest allusion, ever, to the fatal cartilage, . . . unless you fancy an early grave!

Other Cadet. A word will do the business! What did I say? . . . A word? . . . A simple gesture! Make use of your pocket-handkerchief, you will shortly have use for your shroud!

[*Silence. All around* CHRISTIAN *watch him, with folded arms. He rises and goes to* CARBON DE CASTEL-JALOUX, *who, in conversation with an officer, affects to notice nothing.*]

Christian. Captain!

Carbon [*turning and looking him rather contemptuously up and down*]. Monsieur?

Christian. What is the proper course for a man when he finds gentlemen of the South too boastful?

Carbon de Castel-Jaloux. He must prove to them that one can be of the North, yet brave. [*He turns his back upon him.*]

Christian. I am much obliged.

First Cadet [*to* CYRANO]. And now, the tale of your adventure!

All. Yes, yes, now let us hear!

Cyrano [*coming forward among them*]. My adventure? [*All draw their stools nearer, and sit around him, with craned necks.* CHRISTIAN *sits astride a chair.*] Well, then, I was marching to meet them. The moon up in the skies was shining like a silver watch, when suddenly I know not what careful watch-maker having wrapped it in a cottony cloud, there occurred the blackest imaginable night; and, the streets being nowise lighted,—*mordious!*—you could see no further than . . .

Christian. Your nose.

[*Silence. Every one slowly gets up; all look with terror at* CYRANO. *He has stopped short, amazed. Pause.*]

Cyrano. Who is that man?

One of the Cadets [*low*]. He joined this morning.

Cyrano [*taking a step toward* CHRISTIAN]. This morning?

Carbon de Castel-Jaloux [*low*]. His name is Baron de Neuvill . . .

Cyrano [*stopping short*]. Ah, very well. . . . [*He turns pale, then red, gives evidence of another impulse to throw himself upon* CHRISTIAN.] I . . . [*He conquers it and says in a stifled voice.*] Very well. [*He takes up his tale.*] As I was saying . . . [*with a burst of rage*] *Mordious!* . . . [*He continues in a natural tone*] one could not see in the very least. [*Consternation. All resume their seats, staring at one another.*] And I was walking along, reflecting that for a very insignificant rogue I was probably about to offend some great prince who would bear me a lasting grudge, that, in brief, I was about to thrust my . . .

Christian. Nose . . .

[*All get up.* CHRISTIAN *has tilted his chair and is rocking on the hind legs.*]

Cyrano [*choking*]. Finger . . . between the tree and the bark; for the aforesaid prince might be of sufficient power to trip me and throw me . . .

Christian. On my nose . . .

Cyrano [*wipes the sweat from his brow*]. But, said I, "Gascony forward! Never falter when duty prompts! Forward, Cyrano!" and, saying this, I advance—

when suddenly, in the darkness, I barely avoid a blow . . .

Christian. Upon the nose . . .

Cyrano. I ward it . . . and thereupon find myself . . .

Christian. Nose to nose . . .

Cyrano [*springing toward him*]. *Ventre-Saint-Gris!* . . . [*All the* GASCONS *rush forward, to see;* CYRANO, *on reaching* CHRISTIAN, *controls himself and proceeds*] . . . with a hundred drunken brawlers, smelling . . .

Christian. To the nose's limit . . .

Cyrano [*deathly pale, and smiling*] . . . of garlic and of grease. I leap forward, head lowered . . .

Christian. Nose to the wind! . . .

Cyrano. And I charge them. I knock two breathless and run a third through the body. One lets off at me: Paf! and I retort . . .

Christian. Pif!

Cyrano [*exploding*]. Death and damnation! Go,—all of you!

[*All the* CADETS *make for the door.*]

First Cadet. The tiger is roused at last!

Cyrano. All! and leave me with this man.

Second Cadet. Bigre! When we see him again, it will be in the shape of mince-meat!

Ragueneau. Mince-meat? . . .

Other Cadet. In one of your pies.

Ragueneau. I feel myself grow white and flabby as a table-napkin!

Carbon de Castel-Jaloux. Let us go!

Other Cadet. Not a smudge of him will be left!

Other Cadet. What these walls are about to behold gives me gooseflesh to think upon!

Other Cadet [*closing the door at the right*]. Ghastly! . . . Ghastly!

[*All have left, by the back or the sides, a few up the stairway.* CYRANO *and* CHRISTIAN *remain face to face, and look at each other a moment.*]

Cyrano. Embrace me!

Christian. Monsieur . . .

Cyrano. Brave fellow.

Christian. But what does this . . .

Cyrano. Very brave fellow. I wish you to.

Christian. Will you tell me? . . .

Cyrano. Embrace me, I am her brother.

Christian. Whose?

Cyrano. Hers!

Christian. What do you mean?

Cyrano. Roxane's!

Christian [*running to him*]. Heavens! You, her brother?

Cyrano. Or the same thing: her first cousin.

Christian. And she has . . .

Cyrano. Told me everything!

Christian. Does she love me?

Cyrano. Perhaps!

Christian [*seizing his hands*]. How happy I am, monsieur, to make your acquaintance! . . .

Cyrano. That is what I call a sudden sentiment!

Christian. Forgive me! . . .

Cyrano [*looking at him, laying his hand upon his shoulder*]. It is true that he is handsome, the rascal!

Christian. If you but knew, monsieur, how greatly I admire you! . . .

Cyrano. But all those noses which you . . .

Christian. I take them back!

Cyrano. Roxane expects a letter tonight . . .

Christian. Alas!

Cyrano. What is the matter?

Christian. I am lost if I cease to be dumb!

Cyrano. How is that?

Christian. Alas! I am such a dunce that I could kill myself for shame!

Cyrano. But no . . . no. . . . You are surely not a dunce, if you believe you are! Besides, you scarcely attacked me like a dunce.

Christian. Oh, it is easy to find words in mounting to the assault! Indeed, I own to a certain cheap military readiness, but when I am before women, I have not a word to say. . . . Yet their eyes, when I pass by, express a kindness toward me . . .

Cyrano. And do their hearts not express the same when you stop beside them?

Christian. No! . . . for I am of those —I recognize it, and am dismayed!— who do not know how to talk of love.

Cyrano. Tiens! . . . It seems to me that if Nature had taken more pains with my shape, I should have been of those who do know how to talk of it.

Christian. Oh, to be able to express things gracefully!

Cyrano. Oh, to be a graceful little figure of a passing mousquetaire!

Christian. Roxane is a précieuse, . . . there is no chance but that I shall be a disillusion to Roxane!

Cyrano [*looking at* CHRISTIAN]. If I had, to express my soul, such an interpreter! . . .

Christian [*desperately*]. I ought to have eloquence! . . .

Cyrano [*abruptly*]. Eloquence I will lend you! . . . And you, to me, shall lend all-conquering physical charm . . . and between us we will compose a hero of romance!

Christian. What?

Cyrano. Should you be able to say, as your own, things which I day by day would teach you?

Christian. You are suggesting? . . .

Cyrano. Roxane shall not have disillusions! Tell me, shall we win her heart, we two as one? will you submit to feel, transmitted from my leather doublet into your doublet stitched with silk, the soul I wish to share?

Christian. But Cyrano! . . .

Cyrano. Christian, will you?

Christian. You frighten me!

Cyrano. Since you fear, left to yourself, to chill her heart, will you consent, — and soon it will take fire, I vouch for it! — to contribute your lips to my phrases?

Christian. Your eyes shine! . . .

Cyrano. Will you?

Christian. What, would it please you so much?

Cyrano [*with rapture*]. It would . . . [*remembering, and confining himself to expressing an artistic pleasure*] . . . amuse me! It is an experiment fit surely to tempt a poet. Will you complete me, and let me in exchange complete you? We will walk side by side: you in full light, I in your shadow. . . . I will be wit to you . . . you, to me, shall be good looks!

Christian. But the letter, which should be sent to her without delay? . . . Never shall I be able . . .

Cyrano [*taking from his doublet the letter written in the first part of the act*]. The letter? Here it is!

Christian. How? . . .

Cyrano. It only wants the address.

Christian. I . . .

Cyrano. You can send it without uneasiness. It is a good letter.

Christian. You had? . . .

Cyrano. You shall never find us — poets! — without epistles in our pockets to the Chlorises . . . of our imagining! For we are those same that have for mistress a dream blown into the bubble of a name! Take, — you shall convert this feigning into earnest; I was sending forth at random these confessions and laments, you shall make the wandering birds to settle . . . Take it! You shall see . . . I was as eloquent as if I had been sincere! Take, and have done!

Christian. But will it not need to be altered in any part?. . . Written without object, will it fit Roxane?

Cyrano. Like a glove!

Christian. But . . .

Cyrano. Trust to the blindness of love . . . and vanity! Roxane will never question that it was written for her.

Christian. Ah, my friend! [*He throws himself into* CYRANO'S *arms. They stand embraced.*]

One of the Cadets [*opening the door a very little*]. Nothing more . . . The stillness of death . . . I dare not look . . . [*He thrusts in his head.*] What is this?

All the Cadets [*entering and seeing* CYRANO *and* CHRISTIAN *locked in each other's arms*]. Ah! . . . Oh! . . .

One of the Cadets. This passes bounds! [*Consternation.*]

The Mousquetaire [*impudent*]. *Quais? Carbon de Castel-Jaloux.* Our demon is waxen mild as an apostle; smitten upon one nostril, he turns the other also!

The Mousquetaire. It is in order now to speak of his nose, is it? [*Calling* LISE, *with a swaggering air.*] Hey, Lise! now listen and look. [*Pointedly sniffing the air.*] Oh, . . oh, . . . it is surprising! . . . what an odor! [*Going to* CYRANO.] But monsieur must have smelled it, too? Can you tell me what it is, so plain in the air?

Cyrano [*beating him*]. Why, sundry blows!

[*Joyful antics of the* CADETS *in beholding* CYRANO *himself again.*]

ACT THREE

ROXANE'S KISS

A small square in the old Marais. Old-fashioned houses. Narrow streets seen in perspective. At the right, ROXANE'S *house and the wall of her garden, above which spreading tree-tops. Over the house-door, a balcony and window. A bench beside the doorstep.*

The wall is overclambered by ivy, the balcony wreathed with jasmine.

By means of the bench and projecting stones in the wall, the balcony can easily be scaled.

On the opposite side, old house in the same style of architecture, brick and stone, with entrance-door. The door-knocker is swaddled in linen.

At the rise of the curtain, the DUENNA *is seated on the bench. The window on* ROXANE'S *balcony is wide open.*

RAGUENEAU, *in a sort of livery, stands near the* DUENNA; *he is finishing the tale of his misfortunes, drying his eyes.*

Ragueneau. And then, she eloped with a mousquetaire! Ruined, forsaken, I was hanging myself. I had already taken leave of earth, when Monsieur de Bergerac happening along, unhanged me, and proposed me to his cousin as her steward. . . .

The Duenna. But how did you fall into such disaster?

Ragueneau. Lise was fond of soldiers, I, of poets! Mars ate up all left over by Apollo. Under those circumstances, you conceive, the pantry soon was bare.

The Duenna [*rising and calling toward the open window*]. Roxane, are you ready? . . . They are waiting for us! . . .

Roxane's Voice [*through the window*]. I am putting on my mantle!

The Duenna [*to* RAGUENEAU, *pointing at the door opposite*]. It is over there, opposite, we are expected. At Clomire's. She holds a meeting in her little place. A disquisition upon the Softer Sentiments is to be read.

Ragueneau. Upon the Softer Sentiments?

The Duenna [*coyly*]. Yes! . . . [*Calling toward the window.*] Roxane, you must make haste, or we shall miss the disquisition upon the Softer Sentiments!

Roxane's Voice. I am coming!

[*A sound of string-instruments is heard, drawing nearer.*]

Cyrano's Voice [*singing in the wings*]. La! la! la! la! la! . . .

The Duenna [*surprised*]. We are to have music?

Cyrano [*enters followed by two* PAGES *with theorbos*]. I tell you it is a demi-semi-quaver! . . . you demi-semi-noddle!

First Page [*ironically*]. Monsieur knows then about quavers, semi and demi?

Cyrano. I know music, as do all Gassendi's disciples!

The Page [*playing and singing*]. La! la!

Cyrano [*snatching the theorbo from him and continuing the musical phrase*]. I can carry on the melody. . . . La, la, la, la, . . .

Roxane [*appearing on the balcony*]. It is you?

Cyrano [*singing upon the tune he is continuing*]. I, indeed, who salute your lilies and present my respects to your ro-o-oses! . . .

Roxane. I am coming down. [*She leaves the balcony.*]

The Duenna [*pointing at the* PAGES]. What is the meaning of these two virtuosi?

Cyrano. A wager I won, from D'Assoucy. We were disputing upon a question of grammar. Yes! No! Yes! No! Suddenly pointing at these two tall knaves, expert at clawing strings, by whom he constantly goes attended, he said, "I wager a day long of music!" He lost. Until therefore the next rise of the sun, I shall have dangling after me these archlute players, harmonious witnesses of all I do! . . . At first I liked it very well, but now it palls a little. [*To the musicians.*] Hey! . . . Go, from me to Montfleury, and play him a pavane! . . . [*The* PAGES *go toward the back. To the* DUENNA.] I have come to inquire of Roxane, as I do every evening . . . [*To the* PAGES *who are leaving.*] Play a long time . . . and out of tune! [*To the* DUENNA.] . . . whether in the friend of her soul she can still detect no fault?

Roxane [*coming out of the house*]. Ah, how beautiful he is, what wit he has, how deeply I love him!

Cyrano [*smiling*]. Christian has so much wit? . . .

Roxane. Cousin, more than yourself!

Cyrano. I grant you.

Roxane. There is not one alive, I truly believe, more apt at turning those pretty nothings which yet are everything. . . . Sometimes he is of an absent mood, his muse is wool-gathering, then, suddenly, he will say the most enchanting things!

Cyrano [*incredulous*]. Come! . . .

Roxane. Oh, it is too bad! Men are all alike, narrow, narrow: because he is handsome, he cannot possibly be witty!

Cyrano. So he talks of the heart in acceptable fashion?

Roxane. Talks, cousin, is feeble. . . . He dissertates!

Cyrano. And writes? . . . .

Roxane. Still better! Listen now to this . . . [*Declaiming*]. *"The more of my heart you steal from me, the more heart I have!"* [*Triumphantly to* CYRANO.] Well? . . .

Cyrano. Pooh!

Roxane. And to this: *"Since you have stolen my heart, and since I must suffer, to suffer with send me your own!"*

Cyrano. Now he has too much heart, now he has not enough, . . . just what does he want, in the matter of quantity?

Roxane. You vex me! You are eaten up with jealousy . . .

Cyrano [*starting*]. *Hein?*

Roxane. Author's jealousy! And this, could anything be more exquisitely tender? *"Unanimously, believe it, my heart cries out to you, and if kisses could be sent in writing, Love, you should read my letter with your lips . . ."*

Cyrano [*in spite of himself smiling with satisfaction*]. Ha! Ha! Those particular lines seem to me . . . ho! . . . ho! . . . [*remembering himself, disdainfully*] . . . puny, pretty . . .

Roxane. This, then . . .

Cyrano [*delighted*]. You know his letters by heart?

Roxane. All!

Cyrano. It is flattering, one cannot deny.

Roxane. In this art of expressing love he is a master!

Cyrano [*modest*]. Oh, . . . a master!

Roxane [*peremptory*]. A master!

Cyrano. As you please, then . . . a master!

The Duenna [*who had gone toward the back, coming quickly forward*]. Monsieur de Guiche! [*To* CYRANO, *pushing him toward the house.*] Go in! It is perhaps better that he should not see you here! it might put him on the scent . . .

Roxane [*to* CYRANO]. Yes, of my dear secret! He loves me, he is powerful, . . . he must not find out! He might cut in sunder our loves . . . with an axe!

Cyrano [*going into the house*]. Very well, very well.

[DE GUICHE *appears.*]

Roxane [*to* DE GUICHE, *with a curtsey*]. I was leaving the house.

De Guiche. I have come to bid you farewell.

Roxane. You are going away?

De Guiche. To war.

Roxane. Ah!

De Guiche. I have my orders. Arras is besieged.

Roxane. Ah! . . . It is besieged?

De Guiche. Yes. . . . I see that my departure does not greatly affect you.

Roxane. Oh! . . .

De Guiche. As for me, I own it wrings my heart. Shall I see you again? . . . When? . . . You know that I am made commander-in-general?

Roxane [*uninterested*]. I congratulate you.

De Guiche. Of the Guards.

Roxane [*starting*]. Ah, . . . of the Guards?

De Guiche. Among whom your cousin serves, . . . the man of the boasts and tirades. I shall have opportunity in plenty to retaliate upon him down there.

Roxane [*suffocating*]. What? The Guards are going down there?

De Guiche. Surely. It is my regiment.

Roxane [*falls sitting upon the bench; aside*]. Christian!

De Guiche. What is it troubles you?

Roxane [*greatly moved*]. This departure . . . grieves me mortally. When one cares for a person . . . to know him away at the war!

De Guiche [*surprised and charmed*]. For the first time you utter a kind and feeling word, when I am leaving!

Roxane [*in a different tone, fanning herself*]. So . . . you are thinking of revenge upon my cousin?

De Guiche [*smiling*]. You side with him?

Roxane. No . . . against him.

De Guiche. Do you see much of him?

Roxane. Very little.

De Guiche. He is everywhere to be met with one of the cadets . . . [*trying to remember*] that Neu . . . villen . . . viller . . .

Roxane. A tall man?

De Guiche. Light-haired.

Roxane. Red-haired.

De Guiche. Good-looking.

Roxane. Pooh!

De Guiche. But a fool!

Roxane. He looks like one. [*In a different tone.*] Your vengeance upon Cyrano is then to place him within reach of shot, which is the thing of all he loves! . . . A miserable vengeance! . . . I know, I do, what would more seriously concern him!

De Guiche. And that is?

Roxane. Why . . . that the regiment should march, and leave him behind, with his beloved cadets, arms folded, the whole war through, in Paris! That is the only way to cast down a man like him. You wish to punish him? Deprive him of danger.

De Guiche. A woman! A woman! None but a woman could devise a vengeance of the sort!

Roxane. His friends will gnaw their fists, and he his very soul, with chagrin at not being under fire; and you will be abundantly avenged!

De Guiche [*coming nearer*]. Then you do love me a little? [Roxane *smiles.*] I wish to see in this fact of your espousing my grudge a proof of affection, Roxane . . .

Roxane. . . . You may!

De Guiche [*showing several folded papers*]. I have here upon me the orders to be transmitted at once to each of the companies . . . except . . . [*he takes one from among the others.*] This one! . . . the company of the cadets . . . [*He puts it in his pocket.*] This, I will keep. [*Laughing.*] Ah, ah, ah! Cyrano! his belligerent humor! . . . So you sometimes play tricks upon people, you? . . .

Roxane. Sometimes.

De Guiche [*very near her*]. I love you to distraction! This evening . . . listen, . . . it is true that I must be gone. But to go when I feel that it is a matter for your caring! Listen! . . . There is, not far from here, in Rue Orléans, a convent founded by the Capuchins. Father Athanasius. A layman may not enter. But the good fathers . . . I fear no difficulty with them! They will hide me up their sleeve . . . their sleeve is wide. They are the Capuchins that serve Richelieu at home. Fearing the uncle, they proportionately fear the nephew. I shall be thought to have left. I will come to you masked. Let me delay by a single day, wayward enchantress!

Roxane. But if it should transpire . . . your fame . . .

De Guiche. Bah!

Roxane. But . . . the siege . . . Arras! . . .

De Guiche. Must wait! Allow me, I beg . . .

Roxane. No!

De Guiche. I beseech!

Roxane [*tenderly*]. No! Love itself bids me forbid you!

De Guiche. Ah!

Roxane. You must go! [*Aside.*] Christian will stay! [*Aloud.*] For my sake, be heroic . . . Antony!

De Guiche. Ah, heavenly word upon your lips! . . . Then you love the one who . . .

Roxane. Who shall have made me tremble for his sake . . .

De Guiche [*in a transport of joy*]. Ah, I will go! [*He kisses her hand.*] Are you satisfied with me?

Roxane. My friend, I am.

[*Exit* De Guiche.]

The Duenna [*dropping a mocking curtsey toward his back*]. My friend, we are!

Roxane [*to the* Duenna]. Not a word of what I have done: Cyrano would never forgive me for defrauding him of his war! [*She calls toward the house.*] Cousin! [Cyrano *comes out.*] We are going to Clomire's. [*She indicates the house opposite.*] Alcandre has engaged to speak, and so has Lysimon.

The Duenna [*putting her little finger to her ear*]. Yes, but my little finger tells me that we shall be too late to hear them!

Cyrano [*to* Roxane]. Of all things do not miss the trained monkeys!

[*They have reached* Clomire's *door.*]

The Duenna. See! . . . See! they have muffled the door-knocker! [*To the door-knocker.*] You have been gagged, that your voice should not disturb the beau-

tiful lecture, . . . little brutal disturber! [*She lifts it with infinite care and knocks softly.*]

Roxane [*seeing the door open*]. Come! [*From the threshold to* CYRANO.] If Christian should come, as probably he will, say he must wait!

Cyrano [*hurriedly, as she is about to disappear*]. Ah! [*She turns.*] Upon what shall you, according to your custom, question him to-day?

Roxane. Upon . . .

Cyrano [*eagerly*]. Upon? . . .

Roxane. But you will be silent . . .

Cyrano. As that wall!

Roxane. Upon nothing! I will say: Forward! Free rein! No curb! Improvise! Talk of love! Be magnificent!

Cyrano [*smiling*]. Good.

Roxane. Hush!

Cyrano. Hush!

Roxane. Not a word! [*She goes in and closes the door.*]

Cyrano [*bowing, when the door is closed*]. A thousand thanks!

[*The door opens again and* ROXANE *looks out.*]

Roxane. He might prepare his speeches . . .

Cyrano. Ah, no! . . . the devil, no!

Both [*together*]. Hush!

[*The door closes.*]

Cyrano [*calling*]. Christian! [*Enter* CHRISTIAN.] I know all that we need to. Now make ready your memory. This is your chance to cover yourself with glory. Let us lose no time. Do not look sullen, like that. Quick! Let us go to your lodgings and I will rehearse you . . .

Christian. No!

Cyrano. What?

Christian. No, I will await Roxane here.

Cyrano. What insanity possesses you? Come quickly and learn . . .

Christian. No, I tell you! I am weary of borrowing my letters, my words . . . of playing a part, and living in constant fear. . . . It was very well at first, but now I feel that she loves me. I thank you heartily. I am no longer afraid. I will speak for myself . . .

Cyrano. Ouais? . . .

Christian. And what tells you that I shall not know how? I am not such an utter blockhead, after all! You shall see! Your lessons have not been altogether wasted. I can shift to speak without your aid! And, that failing, by Heaven! I shall still know enough to take her in my arms! [*Catching sight of* ROXANE *who is coming out from* CLOMIRE'S.] She is coming! Cyrano, no, do not leave me! . . .

Cyrano [*bowing to him*]. I will not meddle, monsieur. [*He disappears behind the garden wall.*]

Roxane [*coming from Clomire's house with a number of people from whom she is taking leave. Curtseys and farewells.*] Barthénoide! . . . Alcandre! . . . Grémione! . . .

The Duenna [*comically desperate*]. We missed the disquisition upon the Softer Sentiments! [*She goes into* ROXANE'S *house.*]

Roxane [*still taking leave of this one and that*]. Urimédonte! . . . Good-bye!

[*All bow to* ROXANE, *to one another, separate and go off by the various streets.* ROXANE *sees* CHRISTIAN.]

Roxane. You are here! [*She goes to him.*] Evening is closing round. . . . Wait! . . . They have all gone. . . . The air is so mild. . . . Not a passer in sight. . . . Let us sit here. . . . Talk! . . . I will listen.

Christian [*sits beside her, on the bench. Silence.*] I love you.

Roxane [*closing her eyes*]. Yes. Talk to me of love.

Christian. I love you.

Roxane. Yes. That is the theme. Play variations upon it.

Christian. I love . . .

Roxane. Variations!

Christian. I love you so much . . .

Roxane. I do not doubt it. What further? . . .

Christian. And further . . . I should be so happy if you loved me! Tell me, Roxane, that you love me . . .

Roxane [*pouting*]. You proffer cider to me when I was hoping for champagne! . . . Now tell me a little *how* you love me?

Christian. Why . . . very, very much.

Roxane. Oh! . . . unravel, disentangle your sentiments!

Christian. Your throat! . . . I want to kiss it! . . .

Roxane. Christian!

Christian. I love you! . . .

Roxane [*attempting to rise*]. Again! . . .

Christian [*hastily, holding her back*]. No, I do not love you! . . .

Roxane [*sitting down again*]. That is fortunate!

Christian. I adore you!

Roxane [*rising and moving away*]. Oh! . . .

Christian. Yes, . . . love makes me into a fool!

Roxane [*drily*]. And I am displeased at it! as I should be displeased at your no longer being handsome.

Christian. But . . . .

Roxane. Go, and rally your routed eloquence!

Christian. I . . .

Roxane. You love me. I have heard it. Good-evening. [*She goes toward the house.*]

Christian. No, no, not yet! . . . I wish to tell you . . .

Roxane [*pushing open the door to go in*]. That you adore me. Yes, I know. No! No! Go away! . . . Go! . . . Go! . . .

Christian. But I . . .

[*She closes the door in his face.*]

Cyrano [*who has been on the scene a moment, unnoticed*]. Unmistakably a success.

Christian. Help me!

Cyrano. No, sir, no.

Christian. I will go kill myself if I am not taken back into favor at once . . . at once!

Cyrano. And how can I . . . how, the devil? . . . make you learn on the spot . . .

Christian [*seizing him by the arm*]. Oh, there! . . . Look! . . . See!

[*Light has appeared in the balcony window.*]

Cyrano [*with emotion*]. Her window!

Christian. Oh, I shall die!

Cyrano. Not so loud!

Christian [*in a whisper*]. I shall die!

Cyrano. It is a dark night. . . .

Christian. Well?

Cyrano. All may be mended. But you do not deserve . . . There! stand there, miserable boy! . . . in front of the balcony! I will stand under it and prompt you.

Christian. But . . .

Cyrano. Do as I bid you!

The Pages [*reappearing at the back, to* CYRANO]. Hey!

Cyrano. Hush! [*He signs to them to lower their voices.*]

First Page [*in a lower voice*]. We have finished serenading Montfleury!

Cyrano [*low, quickly*]. Go and stand out of sight. One at this street corner, the other at that; and if any one comes near, play! . . .

Second Page. What sort of tune, Monsieur the Gassendist?

Cyrano. Merry if it be a woman, mournful if it be a man. [*The* PAGES *disappear, one at each street corner. To* CHRISTIAN.] Call her!

Christian. Roxane!

Cyrano [*picking up pebbles and throwing them at the window-pane*]. Wait! A few pebbles . . .

Roxane [*opening the window*]. Who is calling me?

Christian. It is I . . .

Roxane. Who is . . . I?

Christian. Christian!

Roxane [*disdainfully*]. Oh, you!

Christian. I wish to speak with you.

Cyrano [*under the balcony, to* CHRISTIAN]. Speak low! . . .

Roxane. No, your conversation is too common. You may go home!

Christian. In mercy! . . .

Roxane. No . . . you do not love me any more!

Christian [*whom* CYRANO *is prompting*]. You accuse me . . . just Heaven! of loving you no more . . . when I can love you no more!

Roxane [*who was about to close her window, stopping*]. Ah, that is a little better!

Christian [*same business*]. To what a . . . size has Love grown in my . . . sigh-rocked soul which the . . . cruel cherub has chosen for his cradle!

Roxane [*stepping nearer to the edge of the balcony*]. That is distinctly better! . . . But, since he is so cruel, this Cupid, you were unwise not to smother him in his cradle!

Christian [*same business*]. I tried to, but, madame, the . . . attempt was futile. This . . . new-born Love is . . . a little Hercules . . .

Roxane. Much, much better!

Christian [*same business*]. . . .Who found it merest baby-play to . . . strangle the serpents . . . twain, Pride and . . . Mistrust.

Roxane [*leaning her elbows on the balcony-rail*]. Ah, that is very good indeed! . . . But why do you speak so slowly and stintedly? Has your imagination gout in its wings?

Cyrano [*drawing* CHRISTIAN *under the balcony, and taking his place*]. Hush! It is becoming too difficult!

Roxane. To-night your words come falteringly. . . . Why is it?

Cyrano [*talking low like* CHRISTIAN]. Because of the dark. They have to grope to find your ear.

Roxane. My words do not find the same difficulty.

Cyrano. They reach their point at once? Of course they do! That is because I catch them with my heart. My heart, you see, is very large, your ear particularly small. . . . Besides, your words drop . . . that goes quickly; mine have to climb . . . and that takes longer!

Roxane. They have been climbing more nimbly, however, in the last few minutes.

Cyrano. They are becoming used to this gymnastic feat!

Roxane. It is true that I am talking with you from a very mountain top!

Cyrano. It is sure that a hard word dropped from such a height upon my heart would shatter it!

Roxane [*with the motion of leaving*]. I will come down.

Cyrano [*quickly*]. Do not!

Roxane [*pointing at the bench at the foot of the balcony*]. Then do you get up on the seat! . . .

Cyrano [*drawing away in terror*]. No!

Roxane. How do you mean . . . no?

Cyrano [*with ever-increasing emotion*]. Let us profit a little by this chance of talking softly together without seeing each other . . .

Roxane. Without seeing each other? . . .

Cyrano. Yes, to my mind, delectable! Each guesses at the other, and no more. You discern but the trailing blackness of a mantle, and I a dawn-gray glimmer which is a summer gown. I am a shadow merely, a pearly phantom are you! You can never know what these moments are to me! If ever I was eloquent . . .

Roxane. You were!

Cyrano. My words never till now surged from my very heart . . .

Roxane. And why?

Cyrano. Because, till now, they must strain to reach you through . . .

Roxane. What?

Cyrano. Why, the bewildering emotion a man feels who sees you, and whom you look upon! . . . But this evening, it seems to me that I am speaking to you for the first time!

Roxane. It is true that your voice is altogether different.

Cyrano [*coming nearer, feverishly*]. Yes, altogether different, because, protected by the dark, I dare at last to be myself. I dare . . . [*He stops, and distractedly.*] What was I saying? . . . I do not know. . . . All this . . . forgive my incoherence! . . . is so delicious . . . is so new to me!

Roxane. So new? . . .

Cyrano [*in extreme confusion, still trying to mend his expressions*]. So new . . . yes, new, to be sincere; the fear of being mocked always constrains my heart . . .

Roxane. Mocked . . . for what?

Cyrano. Why, . . . for its impulses, its flights! . . . Yes, my heart always cowers behind the defence of my wit. I set forth to capture a star . . . and then, for dread of laughter, I stop and pick a flower . . . of rhetoric!

Roxane. That sort of flower has its pleasing points . . .

Cyrano. But yet, to-night, let us scorn it!

Roxane. Never before had you spoken as you are speaking! . . .

Cyrano. Ah, if far from Cupid-darts and quivers, we might seek a place of somewhat fresher things! If instead of drinking, flat sip by sip, from a chiselled golden thimble, drops distilled and dulcified, we might try the sensation of quenching the thirst of our souls by stooping to the level of the great river, and setting our lips to the stream!

Roxane. But yet, wit . . . fancy . . . delicate conceits . . .

Cyrano. I gave my fancy leave to frame conceits, before, to make you linger, . . . but now it would be an affront to this balm-breathing night, to Nature and the hour, to talk like characters in a pastoral performed at Court! . . . Let us give Heaven leave, looking at us with all its earnest stars, to strip us of disguise and artifice: I fear, . . . oh, fear! . . . lest in

our mistaken alchemy sentiment should be subtilized to evaporation; lest the life of the heart should waste in these empty pastimes, and the final refinement of the fine be the undoing of the refined!

Roxane. But yet, wit, . . . aptness, . . . ingenuity . . .

Cyrano. I hate them in love! Criminal, when one loves, to prolong overmuch that paltry thrust and parry! The moment, however, comes inevitably,—and I pity those for whom it never comes!—in which, we apprehending the noble depth of the love we harbor, a shallow word hurts us to utter!

Roxane. If . . . if, then, that moment has come for us two, what words will you say to me?

Cyrano. All those, all those, all those that come to me! Not in formal nosegay order, . . . I will throw them you in a wild sheaf! I love you, choke with love, I love you, dear. . . . My brain reels, I can bear no more, it is too much. . . . Your name is in my heart the golden clapper in a bell; and as I know no rest, Roxane, always the heart is shaken, and ever rings your name! . . . Of you, I remember all, all have I loved! Last year, one day, the twelfth of May, in going out at morning you changed the fashion of your hair. . . . I have taken the light of your hair for my light, and as having stared too long at the sun, on everything one sees a scarlet wheel, on everything when I come from my chosen light, my dazzled eyes set swimming golden blots! . . .

Roxane [*in a voice unsteady with emotion*]. Yes . . . this is love . . .

Cyrano. Ah, verily! The feeling which invades me, terrible and jealous, is love . . . with all its mournful frenzy! It is love, yet self-forgetting more than the wont of love! Ah, for your happiness now readily would I give mine, though you should never know it, might I but, from a distance, sometimes, hear the happy laughter bought by my sacrifice! Every glance of yours breeds in me new strength, new valor! Are you beginning to understand? Tell me, do you grasp my love's measure? Does some little part of my soul make itself felt of you there in the darkness? . . . Oh, what is happening to me this evening is too sweet, too deeply dear! I tell you all these things, and you listen to me, you! Not in my least modest hoping did I ever hope so much! I have now only to die! It is because of words of mine that she is trembling among the dusky branches! For you are trembling, like a flower among leaves! Yes, you tremble, . . . for whether you will or no, I have felt the worshipped trembling of your hand all along this thrilled and blissful jasmine-bough! [*He madly kisses the end of a pendent bough.*]

Roxane. Yes, I tremble . . . and weep . . . and love you . . . and am yours! . . . For you have carried me away . . . away! . . .

Cyrano. Then, let death come! I have moved you, I! . . . There is but one thing more I ask . . .

Christian [*under the balcony*]. A kiss!

Roxane [*drawing hastily back*]. What?

Cyrano. Oh!

Roxane. You ask? . . .

Cyrano. Yes . . . I . . . [*To* Christian.] You are in too great haste!

Christian. Since she is so moved, I must take advantage of it!

Cyrano [*to* Roxane]. I . . . Yes, it is true I asked . . . but, merciful heavens! . . . I knew at once that I had been too bold.

Roxane [*a shade disappointed*]. You insist no more than so?

Cyrano. Indeed, I insist . . . without insisting! Yes! yes! but your modesty shrinks! . . . I insist, but yet . . . the kiss I begged . . . refuse it me!

Christian [*to* Cyrano, *pulling at his mantle*]. Why?

Cyrano. Hush, Christian!

Roxane [*bending over the balcony-rail*]. What are you whispering?

Cyrano. Reproaches to myself for having gone too far; I was saying "Hush, Christian!" [*The theorbos are heard playing.*] Your pardon! . . . a second! . . . Someone is coming!

[Roxane *closes the window.* Cyrano *listens to the theorbos, one of which plays a lively and the other a lugubrious tune.*]

Cyrano. A dance? . . . A dirge? . . . What do they mean? Is it a man or a woman? . . . Ah, it is a monk!

[*Enter a* Capuchin Monk, *who*

goes from house to house, with a lantern, examining the doors.]

Cyrano [*to the* CAPUCHIN]. What are you looking for, Diogenes?

The Capuchin. I am looking for the house of Madame . . .

Christian. He is in the way!

The Capuchin. Magdeleine Robin . . .

Cyrano [*pointing up one of the streets*]. This way! . . . straight ahead . . . go straight ahead . . .

The Capuchin. I thank you. I will say ten Aves for your peace. [*Exit.*]

Cyrano. My good wishes speed your cowl! [*He comes forward toward* CHRISTIAN.]

Christian. Insist upon the kiss! . . .

Cyrano. No, I will not!

Christian. Sooner or later . . .

Cyrano. It is true! It must come, the moment of inebriation when your lips shall imperiously be impelled toward each other, because the one is fledged with youthful gold and the other is so soft a pink!. . . [*To himself.*] I had rather it should be because . . .

[*Sound of the window reopening;* CHRISTIAN *hides under the balcony.*]

Roxane [*stepping forward on the balcony*]. Are you there? We were speaking of . . . of . . . of a . . .

Cyrano. Kiss. The word is sweet. Why does your fair lip stop at it? If the mere word burns it, what will be of the thing itself? Do not make it into a fearful matter, and then fear! Did you not a moment ago insensibly leave playfulness behind and slip without trepidation from a smile to a sigh, from a sigh to a tear? Slip but a little further in the same blessed direction: from a tear to a kiss there is scarcely a dividing shiver!

Roxane. Say no more!

Cyrano. A kiss! When all is said, what is a kiss? An oath of allegiance taken in closer proximity, a promise more precise, a seal on a confession, a rose-red dot upon the letter i in loving; a secret which elects the mouth for ear; an instant of eternity murmuring like a bee; balmy communion with a flavor of flowers; a fashion of inhaling each other's heart, and of tasting, on the brink of the lips, each other's soul!

Roxane. Say no more . . . no more!

Cyrano. A kiss, madame, is a thing so noble that the Queen of France, on the most fortunate of lords, bestowed one, did the queen herself!

Roxane. If that be so . . .

Cyrano [*with increasing fervor*]. Like Buckingham I have suffered in long silence, like him I worship a queen, like him I am sorrowful and unchanging . . .

Roxane. Like him you enthrall through the eyes the heart that follows you!

Cyrano [*to himself, sobered*]. True, I am handsome . . . I had forgotten!

Roxane. Come then and gather it, the supreme flower . . .

Cyrano [*pushing* CHRISTIAN *toward the balcony*]. Go!

Roxane. . . . tasting of the heart.

Cyrano. Go! . . .

Roxane. . . . murmuring like a bee . . .

Cyrano. Go!

Christian [*hesitating*]. But now I feel as if I ought not!

Roxane. . . . making Eternity an instant . . .

Cyrano [*pushing* CHRISTIAN]. Scale the balcony, you donkey!

[CHRISTIAN *springs toward the balcony, and climbs by means of the bench, the vine, the posts and balusters.*]

Christian. Ah, Roxane! [*He clasps her to him, and bends over her lips.*]

Cyrano. Ha! . . . What a turn of the screw to my heart! . . . Kiss, banquet of Love at which I am Lazarus, a crumb drops from your table even to me, here in the shade. . . . Yes, in my outstretched heart a little falls, as I feel that upon the lip pressing her lip Roxane kisses the words spoken by me! . . . [*The theorbos are heard.*] A merry tune . . . a mournful one. . . . The monk! [*He goes through the pretence of arriving on the spot at a run, as if from a distance calling.*] Ho, there!

Roxane. What is it?

Cyrano. It is I. I was passing this way. Is Christian there?

Christian [*astonished*]. Cyrano!

Roxane. Good-evening, cousin!

Cyrano. Cousin, good-evening!

Roxane. I will come down.

[ROXANE *disappears in the house.*]

[CAPUCHIN *re-enters at the back.*]

Christian [*seeing him*]. Oh, again! [*He follows* ROXANE.]

The Capuchin. It is here she lives, I am certain . . . Magdeleine Robin.

Cyrano. You said Ro-lin.

The Capuchin. No, bin, . . . b, i, n, bin!

Roxane [*appearing upon the threshold, followed by* RAGUENEAU *carrying a lantern, and* CHRISTIAN]. What is it?

The Capuchin. A letter.

Christian. What?

The Capuchin [*to* ROXANE]. Oh, the contents can be only of a sacred character! It is from a worthy nobleman who . . .

Roxane [*to* CHRISTIAN]. It is from De Guiche!

Christian. He dares to . . . ?

Roxane. Oh, he will not trouble me much longer! [*Opening the letter.*] I love you, and if . . . [*By the light of* RAGUENEAU'S *lantern she reads, aside, low.*] Mademoiselle: The drums are beating. My regiment is buckling on its corselet. It is about to leave. I am thought to have left already, but lag behind. I am disobeying you. I am in the convent here. I am coming to you, and send you word by a friar, silly as a sheep, who has no suspicion of the import of this letter. You smiled too sweetly upon me an hour ago: I must see you smile again. Provide to be alone, and deign graciously to receive the audacious worshipper, forgiven already, I can but hope, who signs himself your — etc. . . . [*To the* CAPUCHIN.] Father, this is what the letter tells me . . . Listen: [*All draw nearer; she reads aloud.*] Mademoiselle: The wishes of the cardinal may not be disregarded, however hard compliance with them prove. I have therefore chosen as bearer of this letter a most reverend, holy, and sagacious Capuchin; it is our wish that he should at once, in your own dwelling pronounce the nuptial blessing over you. Christian must secretly become your husband. I send him to you. You dislike him. Bow to Heaven's will in resignation, and be sure that it will bless your zeal, and sure, likewise, mademoiselle, of the respect of him who is and will be ever your most humble and . . . etc.

The Capuchin [*beaming*]. The worthy gentleman! . . . I know it! You remember that I said so: The contents of that letter can be only of a sacred character!

Roxane [*low, to* CHRISTIAN]. I am a fluent reader, am I not?

Christian. Hm!

Roxane [*with feigned despair*]. Ah . . . it is horrible!

The Capuchin [*who has turned the light of his lantern upon* CYRANO]. You are the one?

Christian. No, I am.

The Capuchin [*turning the light upon him, and as if his good looks aroused suspicion*]. But . . .

Roxane [*quickly*]. Postscript: You will bestow upon the convent two hundred and fifty crowns.

The Capuchin. The worthy, worthy gentleman! [*To* ROXANE.] Be reconciled!

Roxane [*with the expression of a martyr*]. I will endeavor! [*While* RAGUENEAU *opens the door for the* CAPUCHIN, *whom* CHRISTIAN *is showing into the house,* ROXANE *says low to* CYRANO.] De Guiche is coming! . . . Keep him here! Do not let him enter until . . .

Cyrano. I understand! [*To the* CAPUCHIN.] How long will it take to marry them?

The Capuchin. A quarter of an hour.

Cyrano [*pushing all toward the house*]. Go in! I shall be here!

Roxane [*to* CHRISTIAN]. Come!

[*They go in.*]

Cyrano. How can I detain De Guiche for a quarter of an hour? [*He jumps upon the bench, climbs the wall toward the balcony-rail.*] So! . . . I climb up here! . . . I know what I will do! . . . [*The theorbos play a melancholy tune.*] Ho, it is a man! [*The tune quavers lugubriously.*] Ho, ho, this time there is no mistake! [*He is on the balcony; he pulls the brim of his hat over his eyes, takes off his sword, wraps his cloak about him, and bends over the balcony-rail.*] No, it is not too far! [*He climbs over the balcony-rail, and reaching for a long bough that projects beyond the garden wall, holds on to it with both hands, ready to let himself drop.*] I shall make a slight commotion in the atmosphere!

De Guiche [*enters masked, groping in the dark*]. What can that thrice-damned Capuchin be about?

Cyrano. The devil! if he should recognize my voice? [*Letting go with one hand he makes show of turning a key.*] Cric! crac! [*Solemnly.*] Cyrano, resume the accent of Bergerac!

De Guiche [*looking at* ROXANE'S *house*].

Yes, that is it. I can scarcely see. This mask bothers my eyes!

[*He is about to enter* ROXANE'S *house;* CYRANO *swings from the balcony, holding on to the bough, which bends and lets him down between the door and* DE GUICHE. *He intentionally drops very heavily, to give the effect of dropping from a great height, and lies flattened upon the ground, motionless, as if stunned.*]

De Guiche. What is it? [*When he looks up, the bough has swung into place; he sees nothing but the sky.*] Where did this man drop from?

Cyrano [*rising to a sitting posture*]. From the moon!

De Guiche. From the . . . ?

Cyrano [*in a dreamy voice*]. What time is it?

De Guiche. Is he mad?

Cyrano. What time? What country? What day? What season?

De Guiche. But . . .

Cyrano. I am dazed!

De Guiche. Monsieur . . .

Cyrano. I have dropped from the moon like a bomb!

De Guiche [*impatiently*]. What are you babbling about?

Cyrano [*rising, in a terrible voice*]. I tell you I have dropped from the moon!

De Guiche [*backing a step*]. Very well. You have dropped from the moon! . . . He is perhaps a lunatic!

Cyrano [*walking up close to him*]. Not metaphorically, mind that!

De Guiche. But . . .

Cyrano. A hundred years ago, or else a minute, — for I have no conception how long I have been falling, — I was up there, in that saffron-colored ball!

De Guiche [*shrugging his shoulders*]. You were. Now let me pass!

Cyrano [*standing in his way*]. Where am I? Be frank with me! Keep nothing from me! In what region, among what people, have I been shot like an aerolite?

De Guiche. I wish to pass!

Cyrano. While falling I could not choose my way, and have no notion where I have fallen! Is it upon a moon, or is it upon an earth, I have been dragged by my posterior weight?

De Guiche. I tell you, sir . . .

Cyrano [*with a scream of terror at which* DE GUICHE *starts backward a step*]. Great God! . . . In this country men's faces are soot-black!

De Guiche [*lifting his hand to his face*]. What does he mean?

Cyrano [*still terrified*]. Am I in Algeria? Are you a native? . . .

De Guiche [*who has felt his mask*]. Ah, my mask!

Cyrano [*pretending to be easier*]. So I am in Venice! . . . Or am I in Genoa?

De Guiche [*attempting to pass*]. A lady is expecting me!

Cyrano [*completely reassured*]. Ah, then I am in Paris.

De Guiche [*smiling in spite of himself*]. The rogue is not far from amusing!

Cyrano. Ah, you are laughing!

De Guiche. I laugh . . . but intend to pass!

Cyrano [*beaming*]. To think I should strike Paris! [*Quite at his ease, laughing, brushing himself, bowing.*] I arrived — pray, pardon my appearance! — by the last whirlwind. I am rather unpresentable — Travel, you know! My eyes are still full of star-dust. My spurs are clogged with bristles off a planet. [*Appearing to pick something off his sleeve.*] See, on my sleeve, a comet's hair! [*He makes a feint of blowing it away.*]

De Guiche [*beside himself*]. Sir . . .

Cyrano [*as* DE GUICHE *is about to pass, stretching out his leg as if to show something on it, thereby stopping him*]. Embedded in my calf, I have brought back one of the Great Bear's teeth . . . and as, falling too near the Trident, I strained aside to clear one of its prongs, I landed sitting in Libra, . . . yes, one of the scales! . . . and now my weight is registered up there! [*Quickly preventing* DE GUICHE *from passing, and taking hold of a button on his doublet.*] And if, monsieur, you should take my nose between your fingers and compress it . . . milk would result!

De Guiche. What are you saying? Milk? . . .

Cyrano. Of the Milky Way.

De Guiche. Go to the devil!

Cyrano. No! I am sent from Heaven, literally. [*Folding his arms.*] Will you believe — I discovered it in passing — that

Sirius at night puts on a night-cap? [*Confidentially.*] The lesser Bear is too little yet to bite. . . . [*Laughing.*] I tumbled plump through Lyra, and snapped a string! . . . [*Magnificent.*] But I intend setting all this down in a book, and the golden stars I have brought back caught in my shaggy mantle, when the book is printed, will be seen serving as asterisks!

De Guiche. I have stood this long enough! I want . . .

Cyrano. I know perfectly what you want!

De Guiche. Man . . .

Cyrano. You want to know, from me, at first hand, what the moon is made of, and whether that monumental pumpkin is inhabited?

De Guiche [*shouting*]. Not in the very least! I want . . .

Cyrano. To know how I got there? I got there by a method of my own invention.

De Guiche [*discouraged*]. He is mad! . . . stark!

Cyrano [*disdainfully*]. Do not imagine that I resorted to anything so absurd as Regiomontanus's eagle, or anything so lacking in enterprise as Archytas's pigeon! . . .

De Guiche. The madman is erudite . . .

Cyrano. I drew up nothing that had ever been thought of before! [De Guiche *has succeeded in getting past* Cyrano, *and is nearing* Roxane's *door;* Cyrano *follows him, ready to buttonhole him.*] I invented no less than six ways of storming the blue fort of Heaven!

De Guiche [*turning around*]. Six, did you say?

Cyrano [*volubly*]. One way was to stand naked in the sunshine, in a harness thickly studded with glass phials, each filled with morning dew. The sun in drawing up the dew, you see, could not have helped drawing me up too!

De Guiche [*surprised, taking a step toward* Cyrano]. True. That is one!

Cyrano [*taking a step backward, with a view to drawing* De Guiche *away from the door*]. Or else, I could have let the wind into a cedar coffer, then rarefied the imprisoned element by means of cunningly adjusted burning-glasses, and soared up with it!

De Guiche [*taking another step toward* Cyrano]. Two!

Cyrano [*backing*]. Or else, mechanic as well as artificer, I could have fashioned a giant grasshopper, with steel joints, which, impelled by successive explosions of saltpeter, would have hopped with me to the azure meadows where graze the starry flocks!

De Guiche [*unconsciously following* Cyrano, *and counting on his fingers*]. That makes three!

Cyrano. Since smoke by its nature ascends, I could have blown into an appropriate globe a sufficient quantity to ascend with me!

De Guiche [*as above, more and more astonished*]. Four!

Cyrano. Since Phœbe, the moon-goddess, when she is at wane, is greedy, O beeves! of your marrow, . . . with that marrow have besmeared myself!

De Guiche [*amazed*]. Five!

Cyrano [*who while talking has backed, followed by* De Guiche, *to the further side of the square, near a bench*]. Or else, I could have placed myself upon an iron plate, have taken a magnet of suitable size, and thrown it in the air! That way is a very good one! The magnet flies upward, the iron instantly after; the magnet no sooner overtaken than you fling it up again. . . . The rest is clear! You can go upward indefinitely.

De Guiche. Six! . . . But here are six excellent methods! Which of the six, my dear sir, did you select?

Cyrano. A seventh!

De Guiche. Did you, indeed? And what was that?

Cyrano. I give you a hundred guesses!

De Guiche. No!

Cyrano [*imitating the noise of the surf, and making great mysterious gestures*]. Hoo-ish! hoo-ish!

De Guiche. Well! What is that?

Cyrano. Cannot you guess?

De Guiche. No!

Cyrano. The tide! . . . At the hour in which the moon attracts the deep, I lay down upon the sands, after a sea-bath . . . and, my head being drawn up first, — the reason of this, you see, that the hair will hold a quantity of water in its mop! — I rose in the air, straight, beautifully straight, like an angel. I rose . . . I rose . . .

softly . . . without an effort . . . when, suddenly, I felt a shock. Then . . .

De Guiche [*lured on by curiosity, taking a seat on the bench*]. Well, . . . then?

Cyrano. Then . . . [*resuming his natural voice.*] The time is up, monsieur, and I release you. They are married.

De Guiche [*getting to his feet with a leap*]. I am dreaming or drunk! That voice! [*The door of* ROXANE'S *house opens; lackeys appear carrying lighted candelabra.* CYRANO *removes his hat.*] And that nose! . . . Cyrano!

Cyrano [*bowing*]. Cyrano. They have exchanged rings within the quarter of the hour.

De Guiche. Who have? [*He turns round. Tableau. Behind the lackey stand* ROXANE *and* CHRISTIAN *holding hands. The* CAPUCHIN *follows them smiling.* RAGUENEAU *holds high a flambeau. The* DUENNA *closes the procession, bewildered, in her bedgown.*] Heavens! [*To* ROXANE.] You! [*Recognizing* CHRISTIAN *with amazement.*] He? [*Bowing to* ROXANE.] Your astuteness compels my admiration! [*To* CYRANO.] My compliments to you, ingenious inventor of flying machines. Your experiences would have beguiled a saint on the threshold of Paradise! Make a note of them. . . . They can be used again, with profit, in a book!

Cyrano [*bowing*]. I will confidently follow your advice.

The Capuchin [*to* DE GUICHE, *pointing at the lovers, and wagging his great white beard with satisfaction*]. A beautiful couple, my son, brought together by you!

De Guiche [*eyeing him frigidly*]. As you say! [*To* ROXANE.] And now proceed, Madame, to take leave of your husband.

Roxane. What?

De Guiche [*to* CHRISTIAN]. The regiment is on the point of starting. You are to join it!

Roxane. To go to war?

De Guiche. Of course!

Roxane. But the cadets are not going!

De Guiche. They are! [*Taking out the paper which he had put in his pocket.*] Here is the order. [*To* CHRISTIAN.] I beg you will take it to the Captain, baron, yourself.

Roxane [*throwing herself in* CHRISTIAN'S *arms*]. Christian!

De Guiche [*to* CYRANO, *with a malignant laugh*]. The wedding night is somewhat far as yet!

Cyrano [*aside*]. He thinks that he is giving me great pain!

Christian [*to* ROXANE]. Oh, once more, dear! . . . Once more!

Cyrano. Be reasonable . . . Come! . . . Enough!

Christian [*still clasping* ROXANE]. Oh, it is hard to leave her. . . . You cannot know . . .

Cyrano [*trying to draw him away*]. I know.

[*Drums are heard in the distance sounding a march.*]

De Guiche [*at the back*]. The regiment is on its way!

Roxane [*to* CYRANO, *while she clings to* CHRISTIAN *whom he is trying to draw away*]. Oh! . . . I entrust him to your care! Promise that under no circumstance shall his life be placed in danger!

Cyrano. I will endeavor . . . but obviously cannot promise . . .

Roxane [*same business*]. Promise that he will be careful of himself!

Cyrano. I will do my best, but . . .

Roxane [*as above*]. That during this terrible siege he shall not take harm from the cold!

Cyrano. I will try, but . . .

Roxane [*as above*]. That he will be true to me!

Cyrano. Of course, but yet, you see . . .

Roxane [*as above*]. That he will write to me often!

Cyrano [*stopping*]. Ah, that . . . I promise freely!

ACT FOUR

THE GASCONY CADETS

The post occupied at the siege of Arras by the company of CARBON DE CASTEL-JALOUX. *At the back, across the whole stage, sloping earthwork. Beyond this is seen a plain stretching to the horizon; the country is covered with constructions relating to the siege. In the distance, against the sky, the outlines of the walls and roofs of Arras. Tents; scattered arms; drums, etc. It is shortly before sunrise. The East is yellow. Sentinels at even intervals.*

Camp-fires. The GASCONY CADETS *lie asleep, rolled in their cloaks.* CARBON DE CASTEL-JALOUX *and* LE BRET *are watching. All are very pale and gaunt.* CHRISTIAN *lies sleeping among the others, in his military cape, in the foreground, his face lighted by one of the camp-fires. Silence.*

Le Bret. It is dreadful!

Carbon. Yes. Nothing left.

Le Bret. Mordious!

Carbon [*warning him by a gesture to speak lower*]. Curse in a whisper! You will wake them! . . . [*To the* CADETS.] Hush! Go to sleep! [*To* LE BRET.] Who sleeps dines.

Le Bret. Who lies awake misses two good things . . . What a situation!

[*A few shots are heard in the distance.*]

Carbon. The devil take their popping! They will wake my young ones! . . . [*To the* CADETS *who lift their heads.*] Go to sleep!

[*The* CADETS *lie down again. Other shots are heard, nearer.*]

One of the Cadets [*stirring*]. The devil! Again?

Carbon. It is nothing. It is Cyrano getting home.

[*The heads which had started up, go down again.*]

A Sentinel [*outside*]. *Ventrebleu!* Who goes there?

Cyrano's Voice. Bergerac!

The Sentinel [*upon the embankment*]. *Ventrebleu!* Who goes there?

Cyrano [*appearing at the top of the embankment*]. Bergerac, blockhead! [*He comes down.* LE BRET *goes to him, uneasy.*]

Le Bret. Ah, thank God!

Cyrano [*warning him by a sign to wake no one*]. Hush!

Le Bret. Wounded?

Cyrano. Do you not know that it has become a habit with them to miss me?

Le Bret. To me, it seems a little excessive that you should, every morning, for the sake of taking a letter, risk . . .

Cyrano [*stopping in front of* CHRISTIAN]. I promised that he would write often. [*He looks at* CHRISTIAN.] He sleeps. He has grown pale. If the poor little girl could know that he is starving. . . . But handsome as ever!

Le Bret. Go at once and sleep.

Cyrano. Le Bret, do not grumble! Learn this: I nightly cross the Spanish lines at a point where I know beforehand everyone will be drunk.

Le Bret. You ought some time to bring us back some victuals!

Cyrano. I must be lightly burdened to flit through! . . . But I know that there will be events before the evening. The French, unless I am much mistaken, will eat or die.

Le Bret. Oh, tell us!

Cyrano. No, I am not certain . . . You will see!

Carbon. What a shameful reversal of the order of things, that the besieger should be starved!

Le Bret. Alas! never was more complicated siege than this of Arras: We besiege Arras, and, caught in a trap, are ourselves besieged by the Cardinal-prince of Spain. . . .

Cyrano. Someone now ought to come and besiege him.

Le Bret. I am not joking!

Cyrano. Oh, oh!

Le Bret. To think, ungrateful boy, that every day you risk a life precious as yours, solely to carry . . . [CYRANO *goes toward one of the tents.*] Where are you going?

Cyrano. I am going to write another.

[*He lifts the canvas flap, and disappears in the tent. Daybreak has brightened. Rosy flush. The city of Arras at the horizon catches a golden light. The report of a cannon is heard, followed at once by a drum-call, very far away, at the left. Other drums beat, nearer. The drum-calls answer one another, come nearer, come very near, and go off, decreasing, dying in the distance, toward the right, having made the circuit of the camp. Noise of general awakening. Voices of officers in the distance.*]

Carbon [*with a sigh*]. The réveillé . . . Ah, me! . . . [*The* CADETS *stir in their cloaks, stretch.*] An end to the succulent slumbers! I know but too well what their first word will be!

One of the Cadets [*sitting up*]. I am famished!

Other Cadet. I believe I am dying!

All. Oh! . . .

Carbon. Get up!

Third Cadet. I cannot go a step!

Fourth Cadet. I have not strength to stir!

First Cadet [*looking at himself in a bit of armor*]. My tongue is coated: it must be the weather that is indigestible!

Other Cadet. Anyone who wants them, can have all my titles of nobility for a Chester cheese . . . or part of one!

Other Cadet. If my stomach does not have something put into it to take up the attention of my gastric juice, I shall retire into my tent before long . . . like Achilles!

Other Cadet. Yes, they ought to provide us with bread!

Carbon [*going to the tent into which* CYRANO *has retired; low*]. Cyrano!

Other Cadets. We cannot stand this much longer!

Carbon [*as above, at the door of the tent*]. To the rescue, Cyrano! You who succeed so well always in cheering them, come and make them pluck up spirits!

Second Cadet [*falling upon* FIRST CADET *who is chewing something*]. What are you chewing, man?

First Cadet. A bit of gun-tow fried in axle-grease . . . using a burganet as frying pan. The suburbs of Arras are not precisely rich in game. . . .

Other Cadet [*entering*]. I have been hunting!

Other Cadet [*the same*]. I have been fishing!

All [*rising and falling upon the newcomers*]. What? — what did you catch? — A pheasant? — A carp? — Quick! quick! . . . Let us see!

The Huntsman. A sparrow!

The Angler. A gudgeon!

All [*exasperated*]. Enough of this! Let us revolt!

Carbon. To the rescue, Cyrano!

[*It is now broad daylight.*]

Cyrano [*coming out of the tent, tranquil, a pen behind his ear, a book in his hand*]. What is the matter? [*Silence. To* FIRST CADET.] Why do you go off like that, with that slouching gait?

The Cadet. I have something away down in my heels which inconveniences me.

Cyrano. And what is that?

The Cadet. My stomach.

Cyrano. That is where mine is, too.

The Cadet. Then you too must be inconvenienced.

Cyrano. No. The size of the hollow within me merely increases my sense of my size.

Second Cadet. I happen to have teeth, long ones!

Cyrano. The better will you bite . . . in good time!

Third Cadet. I reverberate like a drum!

Cyrano. You will be of use . . . to sound the charge!

Other Cadet. I have a buzzing in my ears!

Cyrano. A mistake. Empty belly, no ears. You hear no buzzing.

Other Cadet. Ah, a trifling article to eat . . . and a little oil upon it!

Cyrano [*taking off the* CADET'S *morion and placing it in his hand*]. That is seasoned.

Other Cadet. What is there we could devour?

Cyrano [*tossing him the book he has been holding*]. Try the Iliad!

Other Cadet. The minister, in Paris, makes his four meals a day!

Cyrano. You feel it remiss in him not to send you a bit of partridge?

The same. Why should he not? And some wine!

Cyrano. Richelieu, some Burgundy, if you please?

The same. He might, by one of his Capuchins!

Cyrano. By his Eminence, perhaps, in sober gray?

Other Cadet. No ogre was ever so hungry!

Cyrano. You may have your fill yet of humble-pie!

First Cadet [*shrugging his shoulders*]. Forever jests! . . . puns! . . . *mots!*

Cyrano. Le mot forever, indeed! And I would wish to die, on a fine evening, under a rose-flushed sky, delivering myself of a good *mot* in a good cause! . . . Ah, yes, the best were indeed, far from feverbed and potion, pierced with the only noble weapon, by an adversary worthy of oneself, to fall upon a glorious field, the point of a sword through his heart, the point of a jest on his lips! . . .

All [*in a wail*]. I am hungry!

Cyrano [*folding his arms*]. God ha' mercy! can you think of nothing but eating? . . . Come here, Bertrandou the fifer, once the shepherd! Take from the double case one of your fifes: breathe into it, play to this pack of guzzlers and of gluttons our homely melodies, of haunting rhythm, every note of which appeals like a little sister, through whose every strain are heard strains of beloved voices . . . mild melodies whose slowness brings to mind the slowness of the smoke upcurling from our native hamlet hearths . . . melodies that seem to speak to a man in his native dialect! . . . [*The old fifer sits down and makes ready his fife.*] To-day let the fife, martial unwillingly, be reminded, while your fingers upon its slender stem flutter like birds in a delicate minuet, that before being ebony it was reed; surprise itself by what you make it sing, . . . let it feel restored to it the soul of its youth, rustic and peaceable! [*The old man begins playing Languedoc tunes.*] Listen, Gascons! It is no more, beneath his fingers, the shrill fife of the camp, but the soft flute of the woodland! It is no more, between his lips, the whistling note of battle, but the lowly lay of goatherds leading their flocks to feed! . . . Hark! . . . It sings of the valley, the heath, the forest! . . . of the little shepherd, sunburned under his crimson cap! . . . the green delight of evening on the river! . . . Hark, Gascons all! It sings of Gascony!

[*Every head has drooped; all eyes have grown dreamy; tears are furtively brushed away with a sleeve, the hem of a cloak.*]

Carbon [*to* CYRANO, *low*]. You are making them weep!

Cyrano. With homesickness! . . . a nobler pain than hunger . . . not physical: mental! I am glad the seat of their suffering should have removed . . . that the gripe should now afflict their hearts!

Carbon. But you weaken them, making them weep!

Cyrano [*beckoning to a drummer*]. Never fear! The hero in their veins is quickly roused. It is enough to . . . [*He signs to the drummer, who begins drumming.*]

All [*starting to their feet and snatching up their arms*]. *Hein?* . . . What?. . . . What is it?

Cyrano [*smiling*]. You see? . . . The sound of the drum was enough! Farewell dreams, regrets, old homestead, love. . . . What comes with the fife with the drum may go . . .

One of the Cadets [*looking off at the back*]. Ah! ah! . . . Here comes Monsieur de Guiche!

All the Cadets [*grumbling*]. Hoo . . .

Cyrano [*smiling*]. Flattering murmur . . .

One of the Cadets. He bores us! . . .

Other Cadet. Showing himself off, with his broad point collar on top of his armor! . . .

Other Cadet. As if lace were worn with steel!

First Cadet. Convenient, if you have a boil on your neck to cover . . .

Second Cadet. There is another courtier for you!

Other Cadet. His uncle's own nephew!

Carbon. He is a Gascon, nevertheless!

First Cadet. Not genuine! . . . Never trust him. For a Gascon, look you, must be something of a madman: nothing is so deadly to deal with as a Gascon who is completely rational!

Le Bret. He is pale!

Other Cadet. He is hungry, as hungry as any poor devil of us! But his corselet being freely embellished with gilt studs, his stomach-ache is radiant in the sun!

Cyrano [*eagerly*]. Let us not appear to suffer, either! You, your card, your pipes, your dice . . . [*All briskly set themselves to playing with cards and dice, on the heads of drums, on stools, on cloaks spread over the ground. They light long tobacco pipes.*] And I will be reading Descartes. . . .

[*He walks to and fro, forward and backward, reading a small book which he has taken from his pocket. Tableau.*]

[*Enter* DE GUICHE. *Everyone appears absorbed and satisfied.* DE GUICHE *is very pale. He goes toward* CARBON.]

De Guiche [*to* CARBON]. Ah, good-morning. [*They look at each other attentively. Aside, with satisfaction.*] He is pale as plaster.

Carbon [*same business*]. His eyes are all that is left of him.

De Guiche [*looking at the* CADETS]. So here are the wrongheaded rascals? . . .

Yes, gentlemen, it is reported to me on every side that I am your scoff and derision; that the cadets, highland nobility, Béarn clodhoppers, Périgord baronets cannot express sufficient contempt for their colonel; call me intriguer, courtier, find it irksome to their taste that I should wear, with my cuirass, a collar of Genoese point, and never cease to air their wondering indignation that a man should be a Gascon without being a vagabond! [*Silence. The* CADETS *continue smoking and playing.*] Shall I have you punished by your captain? . . . I do not like to.

Carbon. Did you otherwise, however, . . . I am free, and punish only . . .

De Guiche. Ah? . . .

Carbon. My company is paid by myself, belongs to me. I obey no orders but such as relate to war.

De Guiche. Ah, is it so? Enough, then. I will treat your taunts with simple scorn. My fashion of deporting myself under fire is well known. You are not unaware of the manner in which yesterday, at Bapaume, I forced back the columns of the Comte de Bucquoi; gathering my men together to plunge forward like an avalanche, three times I charged him. . . .

Cyrano [*without lifting his nose from his book*]. And your white scarf?

De Guiche [*surprised and self-satisfied*]. You heard of that circumstance? . . . In fact, it happened that as I was wheeling about to collect my men for the third charge, I was caught in a stream of fugitives which bore me onward to the edge of the enemy. I was in danger of being captured and cut off with an arquebuse, when I had the presence of mind to untie and let slip to the ground the white scarf which proclaimed my military grade. Thus was I enabled, undistinguished, to withdraw from among the Spaniards, and thereupon returning with my reinspirited men, to defeat them. Well? . . . What do you say to the incident?

[*The* CADETS *have appeared not to be listening; at this point, however, hands with cards and dice-boxes remain suspended in the air; no pipe-smoke is ejected; all expresses expectation.*]

Cyrano. That never would Henry the Fourth, however great the number of his opponents, have consented to diminish his presence by the size of his white plume.

[*Silent joy. Cards fall, dice rattle, smoke upwreathes.*]

De Guiche. The trick was successful, however!

[*As before, expectation suspends gambling and smoking.*]

Cyrano. Very likely. But one should not resign the honor of being a target. [*Cards, dice, smoke, fall, rattle, and upwreathe, as before, in expression of increasing glee.*] Had I been at hand when you allowed your scarf to drop — the quality of our courage, monsieur, shows different in this,—I would have picked it up and worn it. . . .

De Guiche. Ah, yes, — more of your Gascon bragging! . . .

Cyrano. Bragging? . . . Lend me the scarf. I engage to mount, ahead of all, to the assault, wearing it crosswise upon my breast!

De Guiche. A Gascon's offer, that too! You know that the scarf was left in the enemy's camp, by the banks of the Scarpe, where bullets since then have hailed . . . whence no one can bring it back!

Cyrano [*taking a white scarf from his pocket and handing it to* DE GUICHE]. Here it is.

[*Silence. The* CADETS *smother their laughter behind cards and in dice-boxes.* DE GUICHE *turns around, looks at them; instantly they become grave; one of them, with an air of unconcern, whistles the tune played earlier by the fifer.*]

De Guiche [*taking the scarf*]. I thank you. I shall be able with this shred of white to make a signal . . . which I was hesitating to make. . . . [*He goes to the top of the bank and waves the scarf.*]

All. What now? . . . What is this?

The Sentinel [*at the top of the bank*]. A man . . . over there . . . running off . . .

De Guiche [*coming forward again*]. It is a supposed Spanish spy. He is very useful to us. The information he carries to the enemy is that which I give him, — so that their decisions are influenced by us.

Cyrano. He is a scoundrel!

De Guiche [*coolly tying on his scarf*]. He is a convenience. We were saying? . . . Ah, I was about to tell you. Last

night, having resolved upon a desperate stroke to obtain supplies, the Marshal secretly set out for Dourlens. The royal sutlers are encamped there. He expects to join them by way of the tilled fields; but, to provide against interference, he took with him troops in such number that, certainly, if we were now attacked, the enemy would find easy work. Half of the army is absent from the camp.

Carbon. If the Spaniards knew that, it might be serious. But they do not know.

De Guiche. They do. And are going to attack us.

Carbon. Ah!

De Guiche. My pretended spy came to warn me of their intention. He said, moreover: I can direct the attack. At what point shall it be? I will lead them to suppose it the least strong, and they will centre their efforts against it. I answered: Very well. Go from the camp. Look down the line. Let them attack at the point I signal from.

Carbon [*to the* CADETS]. Gentlemen, get ready!

[*All get up. Noise of swords and belts being buckled on.*]

De Guiche. They will be here in an hour.

First Cadet. Oh! . . . if there is a whole hour! . . .

[*All sit down again, and go on with their games.*]

De Guiche [*to* CARBON]. The main object is to gain time. The Marshal is on his way back.

Carbon. And to gain time?

De Guiche. You will be so obliging as to keep them busy killing you.

Cyrano. Ah, this is your revenge!

De Guiche. I will not pretend that if I had been fond of you, I would have thus singled out you and yours; but, as your bravery is unquestionably beyond that of others, I am serving my King at the same time as my inclination.

Cyrano. Suffer me, monsieur, to express my gratitude.

De Guiche. I know that you affect fighting one against a hundred. You will not complain of lacking opportunity. [*He goes toward the back with* CARBON.]

Cyrano [*to the* CADETS]. We shall now be able, gentlemen, to add to the Gascon escutcheon, which bears, as it is, six chevrons, or and azure, the chevron that was wanting to complete it, — blood-red!

[DE GUICHE *at the back speaks low with* CARBON. *Orders are given. All is made ready to repel an attack.* CYRANO *goes toward* CHRISTIAN, *who stands motionless, with folded arms.*]

Cyrano [*laying his hand on* CHRISTIAN'S *shoulder*]. Christian?

Christian [*shaking his head*]. Roxane!

Cyrano. Ah me!

Christian. I wish I might at least put my whole heart's last blessing in a beautiful letter!

Cyrano. I mistrusted that it would come to-day . . . [*he takes a letter from his doublet*] and I have written your farewells.

Christian. Let me see!

Cyrano. You wish to see it? . . .

Christian [*taking the letter*]. Yes! [*He opens the letter, begins to read, stops short.*] Ah? . . .

Cyrano. What?

Christian. That little round blister?

Cyrano [*hurriedly taking back the letter, and looking at it with an artless air*]. A blister?

Christian. It is a tear!

Cyrano. It looks like one, does it not? . . . A poet, you see, is sometimes caught in his own snare, — that is what constitutes the interest, the charm! . . . This letter, you must know, is very touching. In writing it I apparently made myself shed tears.

Christian. Shed tears? . . .

Cyrano. Yes, because . . . well, to die is not terrible at all . . . but never to see her again, . . . never! . . . that, you know, is horrible beyond all thinking. . . . And, things having taken the turn they have, I shall not see her . . . [CHRISTIAN *looks at him*] we shall not see her . . . [*hastily*] you will not see her. . . .

Christian [*snatching the letter from him*]. Give me the letter! [*Noise in the distance.*]

Voice of a Sentinel. Ventrebleu, who goes there?

[*Shots. Noise of voices, tinkling of bells.*]

Carbon. What is it?

The Sentinel [*on the top of the bank*]. A coach! [*All run to see.*]

[*Noisy exclamations.*] What? — In the camp? — It is driving into the camp! — It

comes from the direction of the enemy! The devil! Fire upon it! — No! the coachman is shouting something! — What does he say? — He shouts: Service of the King!

De Guiche. What? Service of the King?

[*All come down from the bank and fall into order.*]

Carbon. Hats off, all!

De Guiche [*at the corner*]. Service of the King! Stand back, low rabble, and give it room to turn around with a handsome sweep!

[*The coach comes in at a trot. It is covered with mud and dust. The curtains are drawn. Two lackeys behind. It comes to a standstill.*]

Carbon [*shouting*]. Salute!

[*Drums roll. All the* CADETS *uncover.*]

De Guiche. Let down the steps!

[*Two men hurry forward. The coach door opens.*]

Roxane [*stepping from the carriage*]. Good-morning!

[*At the sound of a feminine voice, all the men, in the act of bowing low, straighten themselves. Consternation.*]

De Guiche. Service of the King! You?

Roxane. Of the only King! . . . of Love!

Cyrano. Ah, great God!

Christian [*rushing to her*]. You! Why are you here?

Roxane. This siege lasted too long!

Christian. Why have you come?

Roxane. I will tell you!

Cyrano [*who at the sound of her voice has started, then stood motionless without venturing to look her way*]. God! . . . can I trust myself to look at her?

De Guiche. You cannot remain here.

Roxane. But I can, — I can, indeed! Will you favor me with a drum? [*She seats herself upon a drum brought forward for her.*] There! I thank you! [*She laughs.*] They fired upon my carriage. [*Proudly.*] A patrol! — It does look rather as if it were made out of a pumpkin, does it not? like Cinderella's coach! and the footmen made out of rats! [*Blowing a kiss to* CHRISTIAN.] How do you do? [*Looking at them all.*] You do not look overjoyed! . . . Arras is a long way from Paris, do you know it? [*Catching sight of* CYRANO.] Cousin, delighted!

Cyrano [*coming toward her*]. But how did you . . . ?

Roxane. How did I find the army? Dear me, cousin, that was simple: I followed straight along the line of devastation. . . . Ah, I should never have believed in such horrors had I not seen them! Gentlemen, if that is the service of your King, I like mine better!

Cyrano. But this is mad! . . . By what way did you come?

Roxane. Way? . . . I drove through the Spaniards' camp.

First Cadet. Ah, what will keep lovely woman from her way!

De Guiche. But how did you contrive to get through their lines?

Le Bret. That must have been difficult . . .

Roxane. No, not very. I simply drove through them, in my coach, at a trot. If a hidalgo, with arrogant front, showed likely to stop us, I put my face at the window, wearing my sweetest smile, and, those gentlemen being, — let the French not grudge my saying so! — the most gallant in the world, . . . I passed!

Carbon. Such a smile is a passport, certainly! . . . But you must have been not unfrequently bidden to stand and deliver where you were going?

Roxane. Not unfrequently, you are right. Whereupon I would say, "I am going to see my lover!" At once, the fiercest looking Spaniard of them all would gravely close my carriage door; and, with a gesture the King might emulate, motion aside the musket-barrels levelled at me; and, superb at once for grace and haughtiness, bringing his spurs together, and lifting his plumed hat, bow low and say, "Pass, señorita, pass!"

Christian. But, Roxane . . .

Roxane. I said, "My lover!" yes, forgive me! — You see, if I had said, "My husband!" they would never have let me by!

Christian. But . . .

Roxane. What troubles you?

De Guiche. You must leave at once.

Roxane. I?

Cyrano. At once!

Le Bret. As fast as you can.

Christian. Yes, you must.

Roxane. But why?

Christian [*embarrassed*]. Because . . .

Cyrano [*embarrassed too*]. In three-quarters of an hour . . .

De Guiche [*the same*]. Or an hour . . .

Carbon [*the same*]. You had much better . . .

Le Bret [*the same*]. You might . . .

Roxane. I shall remain. You are going to fight.

All. Oh, no! . . . No!

Roxane. He is my husband! [*She throws herself in* CHRISTIAN'S *arms.*] Let me be killed with you!

Christian. How your eyes shine!

Roxane. I will tell you why they shine!

De Guiche [*desperately*]. It is a post of horrible probabilities!

Roxane [*turning toward him*]. What — of horrible? . . .

Cyrano. In proof of which he appointed us to it! . . .

Roxane. Ah, you wish me made a widow?

De Guiche. I swear to you . . .

Roxane. No! Now I have lost all regard. . . . Now I will surely not go. . . . Besides, I think it fun!

Cyrano. What? The précieuse contained a heroine?

Roxane. Monsieur de Bergerac, I am a cousin of yours!

One of the Cadets. Never think but that we will take good care of you!

Roxane [*more and more excited*]. I am sure you will, my friends!

Other Cadet. The whole camp smells of iris!

Roxane. By good fortune I put on a hat that will look well in battle! [*Glancing toward* DE GUICHE.] But perhaps it is time the Count should go. — The battle might begin.

De Guiche. Ah, it is intolerable! — I am going to inspect my guns, and coming back. — You still have time: think better of it!

Roxane. Never! [*Exit* DE GUICHE.]

Christian [*imploring*]. Roxane!

Roxane. No!

First Cadet. She is going to stay!

All [*hurrying about, pushing one another, snatching things from one another*]. A comb! — Soap! — My jacket is torn, a needle! — A ribbon! — Lend me your pocket-mirror — My cuffs! — Curling-irons! — A razor!

Roxane [*to* CYRANO, *who is still pleading with her*]. No! Nothing shall prevail upon me to stir from this spot!

Carbon [*after having, like the others, tightened his belt, dusted himself, brushed his hat, straightened his feather, pulled down his cuffs, approaches* ROXANE, *and ceremoniously*]. It is, perhaps, proper, since you are going to stay, that I should present to you a few of the gentlemen about to have the honor of dying in your presence . . . [ROXANE *bows, and stands waiting, with her arm through* CHRISTIAN'S.] Baron Peyrescous de Colignac!

The Cadet [*bowing*]. Madame!

Carbon [*continuing to present the* CADETS]. Baron de Casterac de Cahuzac, — Vidame de Malgouyre Estressac Lesbas d'Escarabiot, — Chevalier d'Antignac-Juzet, — Baron Hillot de Blagnac-Saléchan de Castel Crabioules . . .

Roxane. But how many names have you apiece?

Baron Hillot. Innumerable!

Carbon [*to* ROXANE]. Open your hand with the handkerchief!

Roxane [*opens her hand; the handkerchief drops*]. Why?

[*The whole company starts forward to pick it up.*]

Carbon [*instantly catching it*]. My company had no flag! Now, my word, it will have the prettiest one in the army!

Roxane [*smiling*]. It is rather small.

Carbon [*fastening the handkerchief on the staff of his captain's spear*]. But it is lace!

One of the Cadets [*to the others*]. I could die without a murmur, having looked upon that beautiful face, if I had so much as a walnut inside me! . . .

Carbon [*who has overheard, indignant*]. Shame! . . . to talk of food when an exquisite woman . . .

Roxane. But the air of the camp is searching, and I myself am hungry: Patties, jellied meat, light wine . . . are what I should like best! Will you kindly bring me some? [*Consternation.*]

One of the Cadets. Bring you some?

Other Cadet. And where, great God, shall we get them?

Roxane [*quietly*]. In my coach.

All. What?

Roxane. But there is much to be done,

carving and boning and serving. Look more closely at my coachman, gentlemen, and you will recognize a precious individual: the sauces, if we wish, can be warmed over . . .

The Cadets [*springing toward the coach*]. It is Ragueneau! [*Cheers.*] Oh! Oh!

Roxane [*watching them*]. Poor fellows!

Cyrano [*kissing her hand*]. Kind fairy!

Ragueneau [*standing upon the box-seat like a vender at a public fair*]. Gentlemen! [*Enthusiasm.*]

The Cadets. Bravo! Bravo!

Ragueneau. How should the Spaniards, when so much beauty passed, suspect the repast? [*Applause.*]

Cyrano [*low to* CHRISTIAN]. Hm! Hm! Christian!

Ragueneau. Absorbed in gallantry, no heed took they . . . [*he takes a dish from the box-seat*] . . . of galantine!

[*Applause. The galantine is passed from hand to hand.*]

Cyrano [*low to* CHRISTIAN]. A word with you. . . .

Ragueneau. Venus kept their eyes fixed upon herself, while Diana slipped past with the . . . [*he brandishes a joint*] game!

[*Enthusiasm. The joint is seized by twenty hands at once.*]

Cyrano [*low to* CHRISTIAN]. I must speak with you.

Roxane [*to the* CADETS *who come forward, their arms full of provisions*]. Spread it all upon the ground!

[*Assisted by the two imperturbable footmen who were on the back of the coach, she arranges everything on the grass.*]

Roxane [*To* CHRISTIAN, *whom* CYRANO *is trying to draw aside*]. Make yourself useful, sir!

[CHRISTIAN *comes and helps her.* CYRANO *gives evidence of uneasiness.*]

Ragueneau. A truffled peacock!

First Cadet [*radiant, comes forward cutting off a large slice of ham*]. Praise the pigs, we shall not go to our last fight with nothing in our b . . . [*correcting himself at sight of* ROXANE] hm . . . stomachs!

Ragueneau [*flinging the carriage cushions*]. The cushions are stuffed with snipe!

[*Tumult. The cushions are ripped open. Laughter. Joy.*]

Ragueneau [*flinging bottles of red wine*]. Molten ruby! [*Bottles of white wine.*] Fluid topaz!

Roxane [*throwing a folded tablecloth to* CYRANO]. Unfold the cloth: Hey! . . . be nimble!

Ragueneau [*waving one of the coach lanterns*]. Each lantern is a little larder!

Cyrano [*low to* CHRISTIAN, *while together they spread the cloth*]. I must speak with you before you speak with her . . .

Ragueneau. The handle of my whip, behold, is a sausage!

Roxane [*pouring wine, dispensing it*]. Since we are the ones to be killed, *morbleu,* we will not fret ourselves about the rest of the army! Everything for the Gascons! . . . And if De Guiche comes, nobody must invite him! [*Going from one to the other.*] Gently! You have time . . . You must not eat so fast! There, drink. What are you crying about?

First Cadet. It is too good!

Roxane. Hush! White wine or red? — Bread for Monsieur de Carbon! — A knife! — Pass your plate! — You prefer crust? — A little more? — Let me help you. — Champagne? — A wing? —

Cyrano [*following* ROXANE, *his hands full of dishes, helping her*]. I adore her!

Roxane [*going to* CHRISTIAN]. What will you take?

Christian. Nothing!

Roxane. Oh, but you must take something! This biscuit — in a little Muscatel — just a little?

Christian [*trying to keep her from going*]. Tell me what made you come?

Roxane. I owe myself to those poor fellows . . . Be patient, . . . By and by . . .

Le Bret [*who had gone toward the back to pass a loaf of bread on the end of a pike to the* SENTINEL *upon the earthwork*]. De Guiche!

Cyrano. Presto! Vanish basket, flagon, platter and pan! Hurry! Let us look as if nothing were! [*To* RAGUENEAU.] Take a flying leap on to your box! — Is everything hidden?

[*In a wink, all the eatables have been pushed into the tents, or hidden under clothes, cloaks, hats.*]

[*Enter* DE GUICHE, *hurriedly; he*

stops short, sniffing the air. Silence.]

De Guiche. What a good smell!

One of the Cadets [*singing, with effect of mental abstraction*]. To lo lo lo. . . .

De Guiche [*stopping and looking at him closely*]. What is the matter with you—you, there? You are red as a crab.

The Cadet. I? Nothing . . . It is just my blood. . . . We are going to fight: it tells . . .

Other Cadet. Poom . . . poom . . . poom . . .

De Guiche [*turning*]. What is this?

The Cadet [*slightly intoxicated*]. Nothing . . . A song . . . just a little song.

De Guiche. You look in good spirits, my boy!

The Cadet. Danger affects me that way!

De Guiche [*calling* CARBON DE CASTEL-JALOUX *to give an order*]. Captain, I . . . [*He stops at sight of his face.*] *Peste!* You look in good spirits, too.

Carbon [*flushed, holding a bottle behind him; with an evasive gesture*]. Oh! . . .

De Guiche. I had a cannon left over, which I have ordered them to place [*he points in the wing*] there, in that corner, and which your men can use, if necessary . . .

One of the Cadets [*swaying from one foot to the other*]. Charming attention!

Other Cadet [*smiling sugarily*]. Our thanks for your gracious thoughtfulness!

De Guiche. Have they gone mad? . . . [*Drily.*] As you are not accustomed to handling a cannon, look out for its kicking . . .

First Cadet. Ah, pfft! . . .

De Guiche [*going toward him, furious*]. But . . .

The Cadet. A cannon knows better than to kick a Gascon!

De Guiche [*seizing him by the arm and shaking him*]. You are all tipsy: on what?

The Cadet [*magnificently*]. The smell of powder!

De Guiche [*shrugs his shoulders, pushes aside the* CADET, *and goes rapidly toward* ROXANE]. Quick, Madame! what have you condescended to decide?

Roxane. I remain.

De Guiche. Retire, I beseech you!

Roxane. No.

De Guiche. If you are determined, then . . . Let me have a musket!

Carbon. What do you mean?

De Guiche. I, too, will remain.

Cyrano. At last, monsieur, an instance of pure and simple bravery!

First Cadet. Might you be a Gascon, lace collar notwithstanding?

De Guiche. I do not leave a woman in danger.

Second Cadet [*to* FIRST CADET]. Look here! I think he might be given something to eat!

[*All the food reappears, as if by magic.*]

De Guiche [*his eyes brightening*]. Provisions?

Third Cadet. Under every waistcoat!

De Guiche [*mastering himself, haughtily*]. Do you imagine that I will eat your leavings?

Cyrano [*bowing*]. You are improving!

De Guiche [*proudly, falling at the last of the sentence into a slightly* GASCON *accent*]. I will fight before I eat!

First Cadet [*exultant*]. Fight! Eat! . . . He spoke with an accent!

De Guiche [*laughing*]. I did?

The Cadet. He is one of us!

[*All fall to dancing*].

Carbon [*who a moment before disappeared behind the earthworks, reappearing at the top*]. I have placed my pikemen. They are a determined troop . . .

[*He points at a line of pikes projecting above the bank.*]

De Guiche [*to* ROXANE, *bowing*]. Will you accept my hand and pass them in review?

[*She takes his hand; they go toward the bank. Everyone uncovers and follows.*]

Christian [*going to* CYRANO, *quickly*]. Speak! Be quick!

[*As* ROXANE *appears at the top of the bank, the pikes disappear, lowered in a salute, and a cheer goes up;* ROXANE *bows.*]

Pikemen [*outside*]. Vivat!

Christian. What did you want to tell me?

Cyrano. In case Roxane . . .

Christian. Well?

Cyrano. Should speak to you of the letters . . .

Christian. Yes, the letters. I know!

Cyrano. Do not commit the blunder of appearing surprised . . .

Christian. At what?

Cyrano. I must tell you! . . . It is quite simple, and merely comes into my mind to-day because I see her. You have . . .

Christian. Hurry!

Cyrano. You . . . you have written to her oftener than you suppose . . .

Christian. Oh, have I?

Cyrano. Yes. It was my business, you see. I had undertaken to interpret your passion, and sometimes I wrote without having told you I should write.

Christian. Ah?

Cyrano. It is very simple.

Christian. But how did you succeed since we have been so closely surrounded, in . . . ?

Cyrano. Oh, before daybreak I could cross the lines . . .

Christian [*folding his arms*]. Ah, that is very simple, too? . . . And how many times a week have I been writing? Twice? Three times? Four? . . .

Cyrano. More.

Christian. Every day?

Cyrano. Yes, every day . . . twice.

Christian [*violently*]. And you cared so much about it that you were willing to brave death . . .

Cyrano [*seeing* ROXANE, *who returns*]. Be still . . . Not before her!

[*He goes quickly into his tent.* CADETS *come and go at the back.* CARBON *and* DE GUICHE *give orders.*]

Roxane [*running to* CHRISTIAN]. And now, Christian . . .

Christian [*taking her hands*]. And now, you shall tell me why, over these fearful roads, through these ranks of rough soldiery, you risked your dear self to join me?

Roxane. Because of the letters!

Christian. The . . . ? What did you say?

Roxane. It is through your fault that I have been exposed to such and so many dangers. It is your letters that have gone to my head! Ah, think how many you have written me in a month, each one more beautiful . . .

Christian. What? . . . Because of a few little love letters . . .

Roxane. Say nothing! You cannot understand! Listen: The truth is that I took to idolizing you one evening, when below my window, in a voice I did not know before, your soul began to reveal itself. . . . Think then what the effect should be of your letters, which have been like your voice heard constantly for one month, your voice of that evening, so tender, caressing . . . You must bear it as you can, I have come to you! Prudent Penelope would not have stayed at home with her eternal tapestry, if Ulysses, her lord, had written as you write . . . but, impulsive as Helen, have tossed aside her yarns, and flown to join him!

Christian. But . . .

Roxane. I read them, I re-read them, in reading I grew faint . . . I became your own indeed! Each fluttering leaf was like a petal of your soul wafted to me. . . . In every word of those letters, love is felt as a flame would be felt,—love, compelling, sincere, profound . . .

Christian. Ah, sincere, profound? . . . You say that it can be felt, Roxane?

Roxane. He asks me!

Christian. And so you came? . . .

Roxane. I came—oh, Christian, my own, my master! If I were to kneel at your feet you would lift me, I know. It is my soul therefore which kneels, and never can you lift it from that posture!—I came to implore your pardon—as it is fitting, for we are both perhaps about to die!—your pardon for having done you the wrong, at first, in my shallowness, of loving you . . . for mere looking!

Christian [*in alarm*]. Ah, Roxane! . . .

Roxane. Later, dear one, grown less shallow—similar to a bird which flutters before it can fly,— your gallant exterior appealing to me still, but your soul appealing equally, I loved you for both! . . .

Christian. And now?

Roxane. Now at last yourself are vanquished by yourself: I love you for your soul alone . . .

Christian [*drawing away*]. Ah, Roxane!

Roxane. Rejoice! For to be loved for that wherewith we are clothed so fleetingly must put a noble heart to torture. . . . Your dear thought at last casts your dear face in shadow: the harmonious lineaments whereby at first you pleased me, I do not see them, now my eyes are open!

Christian. Oh!

Roxane. You question your own triumph?

Christian [*sorrowfully*]. Roxane!

Roxane. I understand, you cannot conceive of such a love in me?

Christian. I do not wish to be loved like that! I wish to be loved quite simply . . .

Roxane. For that which other women till now have loved in you? Ah, let yourself be loved in a better way.

Christian. No. . . . I was happier before! . . .

Roxane. Ah, you do not understand! It is now that I love you most, that I truly love you. It is that which makes you, you —can you not grasp it?—that I worship. . . . And did you no longer walk our earth like a young martial Apollo . . .

Christian. Say no more!

Roxane. Still would I love you! . . . Yes, though a blight should have fallen upon your face and form . . .

Christian. Do not say it!

Roxane. But I do say it, . . . I do!

Christian. What? If I were ugly, distinctly, offensively?

Roxane. If you were ugly, dear, I swear it!

Christian. God!

Roxane. And you are glad, profoundly glad?

Christian [*in a smothered voice*]. Yes . . .

Roxane. What is it?

Christian [*pushing her gently away*]. Nothing. I have a word or two to say to someone: your leave, for a second . . .

Roxane. But . . .

Christian [*pointing at a group of* CADETS *at the back*]. In my selfish love, I have kept you from those poor brothers. . . . Go, smile on them a little, before they die, dear . . . go!

Roxane [*moved*]. Dear Christian!

[*She goes toward the* GASCONS *at the back; they respectfully gather around her.*]

Christian [*calling toward* CYRANO'S *tent*]. Cyrano!

Cyrano [*appears, armed for battle*]. What is it? . . . How pale you are!

Christian. She does not love me any more!

Cyrano. What do you mean?

Christian. She loves you.

Cyrano. No!

Christian. She only loves my soul!

Cyrano. No!

Christian. Yes! Therefore it is you she loves . . . and you love her . . .

Cyrano. I . . .

Christian. I know it!

Cyrano. It is true.

Christian. To madness!

Cyrano. More.

Christian. Tell her, then.

Cyrano. No!

Christian. Why not?

Cyrano. Look at me!

Christian. She would love me grown ugly.

Cyrano. She told you so?

Christian. With the utmost frankness!

Cyrano. Ah! I am glad she should have told you that! But, believe me, believe me, place no faith in such a mad asseveration! Dear God, I am glad such a thought should have come to her, and that she should have spoken it,—but believe me, do not take her at her word: Never cease to be the handsome fellow you are. . . . She would not forgive me!

Christian. That is what I wish to discover.

Cyrano. No! no!

Christian. Let her choose between us! You shall tell her everything.

Cyrano. No . . . No . . . I refuse the ordeal!

Christian. Shall I stand in the way of your happiness because my outside is not so much amiss?

Cyrano. And I? shall I destroy yours, because, thanks to the hazard that sets us upon earth, I have the gift of expressing . . . what you perhaps feel?

Christian. You shall tell her everything!

Cyrano. He persists in tempting me. . . . It is a mistake . . . and cruel!

Christian. I am weary of carrying about, in my own self, a rival!

Cyrano. Christian!

Christian. Our marriage . . . contracted without witnesses . . . can be annulled . . . if we survive!

Cyrano. He persists!

Christian. Yes. I will be loved for my sole self, or not at all!—I am going to see what they are about. Look! I will walk to the end of the line and back. . . . Tell her, and let her pronounce between us.

Cyrano. She will pronounce for you.

Christian. I can but hope she will! [*calling*] Roxane!

Cyrano. No! No!

Roxane [*coming forward*]. What is it?

Christian. Cyrano has something to tell you . . . something important!

[ROXANE *goes hurriedly to* CYRANO. *Exit* CHRISTIAN.]

Roxane. Something important?

Cyrano [*distracted*]. He is gone! . . . [*To* ROXANE]. Nothing whatever! He attaches — but you must know him of old! —he attaches importance to trifles. . . .

Roxane [*quickly*]. He did not believe what I told him a moment ago? . . . I saw that he did not believe . . .

Cyrano [*taking her hand*]. But did you in very truth tell him the truth?

Roxane. Yes. Yes. I should love him even . . . [*She hesitates a second.*]

Cyrano [*smiling sadly*]. You do not like to say it before me?

Roxane. But . . .

Cyrano. I shall not mind! . . . Even if he were ugly?

Roxane. Yes . . . Ugly. [*Musket shots outside.*] They are firing!

Cyrano [*ardently*]. Dreadfully ugly?

Roxane. Dreadfully.

Cyrano. Disfigured?

Roxane. Disfigured!

Cyrano. Grotesque?

Roxane. Nothing could make him grotesque . . . to me.

Cyrano. You would love him still?

Roxane. I believe that I should love him more . . . if that were possible!

Cyrano [*losing his head, aside*]. My God, perhaps she means it . . . perhaps it is true . . . and that way is happiness [*To* ROXANE.] I . . . Roxane . . . listen!

Le Bret [*comes in hurriedly; calls softly*]. Cyrano!

Cyrano [*turning*]. *Hein?*

Le Bret. Hush! [*He whispers a few words to* CYRANO.]

CYRANO [*letting* ROXANE'S *hand drop, with a cry*]. Ah! . . .

Roxane. What ails you?

Cyrano [*to himself, in consternation*]. It is finished! [*Musket reports.*]

Roxane. What is it? What is happening? Who is firing?

[*She goes to the back to look off.*]

Cyrano. It is finished. . . . My lips are sealed forevermore!

[CADETS *come in, attempting to conceal something they carry among them; they surround it, preventing* ROXANE'S *seeing it.*]

Roxane. What has happened?

Cyrano [*quickly stopping her as she starts toward them*]. Nothing!

Roxane. These men? . . .

Cyrano [*drawing her away*]. Pay no attention to them!

Roxane. But what were you about to say to me before?

Cyrano. What was I about to say? . . . Oh, nothing! . . . Nothing whatever, I assure you. [*Solemnly.*] I swear that Christian's spirit, that his soul, were . . . [*in terror, correcting himself*] are the greatest that . . .

Roxane. Were? . . . [*With a great cry.*] Ah! . . .

[*Runs to the group of* CADETS, *and thrusts them aside.*]

Cyrano. It is finished!

Roxane [*seeing* CHRISTIAN *stretched out in his cloak*]. Christian!

Le Bret [*to* CYRANO]. At the enemy's first shot!

[ROXANE *throws herself on* CHRISTIAN'S *body. Musket reports. Clashing of swords. Tramping. Drums.*]

Carbon [*sword in hand*]. The attack! To your muskets!

[*Followed by the* CADETS *he goes to the further side of the earthworks.*]

Roxane. Christian!

Carbon's Voice [*beyond the earthworks*]. Make haste!

Roxane. Christian!

Carbon. Fall into line!

Roxane. Christian!

Carbon. Measure . . . match!

[RAGUENEAU *has come running in with water in a steel cap.*]

Christian [*in a dying voice*]. Roxane!

Cyrano [*quick, low in* CHRISTIAN'S *ear, while* ROXANE, *distracted, dips into the water a fragment of linen torn from her breast to bind his wound*]. I have told her everything! . . . You are still the one she loves! [CHRISTIAN *closes his eyes.*]

Roxane. What, dear love?

Carbon. Muzzle . . . high!

Roxane [*to* CYRANO]. He is not dead? . . .

Carbon. Open charge . . . with teeth!

Roxane. I feel his cheek grow cold against my own!

Carbon. Take aim!

Roxane. A letter on his breast. . . . [*She opens it.*] To me!

Cyrano [*aside*]. My letter!

Carbon. Fire!

[*Musket shots. Cries. Roar of battle.*]

Cyrano [*trying to free his hand which* ROXANE *clasps kneeling*]. But, Roxane, they are fighting.

Roxane [*clinging*]. No! . . . Stay with me a little! . . . He is dead. You are the only one that truly knew him . . . [*She cries subduedly.*] Was he not an exquisite being, . . . an exceptional, marvellous being? . . .

Cyrano [*standing bareheaded*]. Yes, Roxane.

Roxane. A poet without his peer, . . . one verily to reverence?

Cyrano. Yes, Roxane.

Roxane. A sublime spirit?

Cyrano. Yes, Roxane.

Roxane. A profound heart, such as the profane could never have understood . . . a soul as noble as it was charming? . . .

Cyrano [*firmly*]. Yes, Roxane.

Roxane [*throwing herself on* CHRISTIAN'S *body*]. And he is dead!

Cyrano [*aside, drawing his sword*]. And I have now only to die, since, without knowing it, she mourns my death in his!

[*Trumpets in the distance.*]

De Guiche [*reappears on the top of the bank, bareheaded, his forehead bloody; in a thundering voice*]. The signal they promised! The flourish of trumpets! . . . The French are entering the camp with supplies! . . . Stand fast a little longer!

Roxane. Upon his letter . . . blood, . . . tears!

A Voice [*outside, shouting*]. Surrender!

Voices of the Cadets. No!

Ragueneau [*who from the top of the coach is watching the battle beyond the bank*]. The conflict rages hotter! . . .

Cyrano [*to* DE GUICHE *pointing at* ROXANE]. Take her away! . . . I am going to charge.

Roxane [*kissing the letter, in a dying voice*]. His blood! . . . his tears!

Ragueneau [*leaping from the coach and running to* ROXANE]. She is fainting!

De Guiche [*at the top of the bank, to the* CADETS, *madly*]. Stand fast!

Voice [*outside*]. Surrender!

Voices of the Cadets. No!

Cyrano [*to* DE GUICHE]. Your courage none will question . . . [*Pointing at* ROXANE.] Fly for the sake of saving her!

De Guiche [*runs to* ROXANE *and lifts her in his arms*]. So be it! But we shall win the day if you can hold out a little longer . . .

Cyrano. We can. [*To* ROXANE, *whom* DE GUICHE, helped by RAGUENEAU, *is carrying off insensible.*] Good-bye, Roxane!

[*Tumult. Cries.* CADETS *reappear, wounded, and fall upon the stage.* CYRANO *dashing forward to join the combatants is stopped on the crest of the bank by* CARBON *covered with blood.*]

Carbon. We are losing ground . . . I have got two halberd wounds . . .

Cyrano [*yelling to the* GASCONS]. Steadfast! . . . Never give them an inch! . . . Brave boys! [*To* CARBON.] Fear nothing! I have various deaths to avenge: Christian's and all my hopes'! [*They come down.* CYRANO *brandishes the spear at the head of which* ROXANE'S *handkerchief is fastened.*] Float free, little cobweb flag, embroidered with her initials! [*He drives the spear-staff into the earth; shouts to the* CADETS.] Fall on them, boys! . . . Crush them! [*To the fifer.*] Fifer, play!

[*The fifer plays. Some of the wounded get to their feet again. Some of the* CADETS, *coming down the bank, group themselves around* CYRANO *and the little flag. The coach, filled and covered with men, bristles with muskets and becomes a redoubt.*]

One of the Cadets [*appears upon the top of the bank backing while he fights; he cries*]. They are coming up the slope!

[*Falls dead.*]

Cyrano. We will welcome them!

[*Above the bank suddenly rises a formidable array of enemies. The great banners of the Imperial Army appear.*]

Cyrano. Fire! [*General discharge.*]
Cry [*among the hostile ranks*]. Fire!
[*Shots returned.* CADETS *drop on every side.*]
A Spanish Officer [*taking off his hat*]. What are these men, so determined all to be killed?
Cyrano [*declaiming, as he stands in the midst of flying bullets*].
They are the Gascony Cadets
Of Carbon de Castel-Jalous;
Famed fighters, liars, desperates . . .
[*He leaps forward, followed by a handful of survivors.*]
They are the Gascony Cadets! . . .
[*The rest is lost in the confusion of battle.*]

ACT FIVE

CYRANO'S GAZETTE

Fifteen years later, 1655. *The park belonging to the convent of the Sisters of the Cross, in Paris.*

Superb shade-trees. At the left, the house; several doors opening on to broad terrace with steps. In the centre of the stage, huge trees standing alone in a clear oval space. At the right, first wing, a semi-circular stone seat, surrounded by large box-trees.

All along the back of the stage, an avenue of chestnut-trees, which leads, at the right, fourth wing, to the door of a chapel seen through trees. Through the double row of trees overarching the avenue are seen lawns, other avenues, clumps of trees, the further recesses of the park, the sky.

The chapel opens by a small side-door into a colonnade, overrun by a scarlet creeper; the colonnade comes forward and is lost to sight behind the box-trees at the right.

It is Autumn. The leaves are turning, above the still fresh grass. Dark patches of evergreens, box and yew. Under each tree a mat of yellow leaves. Fallen leaves litter the whole stage, crackle underfoot, lie thick on the terrace and the seats.

Between the seat at the right and the tree in the centre, a large embroidery frame, in front of which a small chair. Baskets full of wools, in skeins and balls. On the frame, a piece of tapestry, partly done.

At the rise of the curtain, nuns come and go in the park; a few are seated on the stone seat around an older nun; leaves are falling.

Sister Martha [*to* MOTHER MARGARET]. Sister Claire, after putting on her cap, went back to the mirror, to see herself again.
Mother Margaret [*to* SISTER CLAIRE]. It was unbecoming, my child.
Sister Claire. But Sister Martha, to-day, after finishing her portion, went back to the tart for a plum. I saw her!
Mother Margaret [*to* SISTER MARTHA]. My child, it was ill done.
Sister Claire. I merely glanced! . . .
Sister Martha. The plum was about so big! . . .
Mother Margaret. This evening when Monsieur Cyrano comes, I will tell him.
Sister Claire [*alarmed*]. No! He will laugh at us!
Sister Martha. He will say that nuns are very vain!
Sister Claire. And very greedy!
Mother Margaret. And really very good.
Sister Claire. Mother Margaret, is it not true that he has come here every Saturday in the last ten years?
Mother Margaret. Longer! Ever since his cousin brought among our linen coifs her coif of crape, the worldly symbol of her mourning, which settled like a sable bird amidst our flock of white some fourteen years ago.
Sister Martha. He alone, since she took her abode in our cloister, has art to dispel her never-lessening sorrow.
All the Nuns. He is so droll! — It is merry when he comes! — He teases us! — He is delightful! — We are greatly attached to him! — We are making Angelica paste to offer him!
Sister Martha. He is not, however, a very good Catholic!
Sister Claire. We will convert him.
The Nuns. We will! We will!
Mother Margaret. I forbid your renewing that attempt, my children. Do not trouble him: he might not come so often!
Sister Martha. But . . . God!
Mother Margaret. Set your hearts at rest: God must know him of old!
Sister Martha. But every Saturday, when

he comes, he says to me as soon as he sees me, "Sister, I ate meat, yesterday!"

Mother Margaret. Ah, that is what he says? . . . Well, when he last said it, he had eaten nothing for two days.

Sister Martha. Mother!

Mother Margaret. He is poor.

Sister Martha. Who told you?

Mother Margaret. Monsieur Le Bret.

Sister Martha. Does no one offer him assistance?

Mother Margaret. No, he would take offence.

[*In one of the avenues at the back appears* ROXANE, *in black, wearing a widow's coif and long mourning veil;* DE GUICHE, *markedly older, magnificently dressed, walks beside her. They go very slowly.* MOTHER MARGARET *gets up.*]

Mother Margaret. Come, we must go within. Madame Magdeleine is walking in the park with a visitor.

Sister Martha [*low to* SISTER CLAIRE]. Is not that the Marshal-duke de Grammont?

Sister Claire [*looking*]. I think it is!

Sister Martha. He has not been to see her in many months!

The Nuns. He is much engaged! — The Court! — The Camp! —

Sister Claire. Cares of this world!

[*Exeunt.* DE GUICHE *and* ROXANE *come forward silently, and stop near the embroidery frame. A pause.*]

De Guiche. And so you live here, uselessly fair, always in mourning?

Roxane. Always.

De Guiche. As faithful as of old?

Roxane. As faithful.

De Guiche [*after a time*]. Have you forgiven me?

Roxane. Since I am here.

De Guiche. And he was really such a rare being?

Roxane. To understand, one must have known him!

De Guiche. Ah, one must have known him! . . . Perhaps I did not know him well enough. And his last letter, still and always, against your heart?

Roxane. I wear it on this velvet, as a more holy scapular.

De Guiche. Even dead, you love him?

Roxane. It seems to me sometimes he is but half dead, that our hearts have not been severed, that his love still wraps me round, no less than ever living!

De Guiche [*after another silence*]. Does Cyrano come here to see you?

Roxane. Yes, often. That faithful friend fulfils by me the office of gazette. His visits are regular. He comes: when the weather is fine, his armchair is brought out under the trees. I wait for him here with my work; the hour strikes; on the last stroke, I hear — I do not even turn to see who comes! — his cane upon the steps; he takes his seat; he rallies me upon my never-ending tapestry; he tells off the events of the week, and . . . [LE BRET *appears on the steps.*] Ah, Le Bret! [LE BRET *comes down the steps.*] How does your friend?

Le Bret. Ill.

De Guiche. Oh!

Roxane. He exaggerates! . . .

Le Bret. All is come to pass as I foretold: neglect! poverty! his writings ever breeding him new enemies! Fraud he attacks in every embodiment: usurpers, pious pretenders, plagiarists, asses in lions' skins . . . all! He attacks all!

Roxane. No one, however, but stands in profound respect of his sword. They will never succeed in silencing him.

De Guiche [*shaking his head*]. Who knows?

Le Bret. What I fear is not the aggression of man; what I fear is loneliness and want and winter creeping upon him like stealthy wolves in his miserable attic; they are the insidious foes that will have him by the throat at last! . . . Every day he tightens his belt by an eyelet; his poor great nose is pinched, and turned the sallow of old ivory; the worn black serge you see him in is the only coat he has!

De Guiche. Ah, there is one who did not succeed! . . . Nevertheless, do not pity him too much.

Le Bret [*with a bitter smile*]. Marshal! . . .

De Guiche. Do not pity him too much: he signed no bonds with the world; he has lived free in his thought as in his actions.

Le Bret [*as above*]. Duke . . .

De Guiche [*haughtily*]. I know, yes: I

have everything, he has nothing. . . . But I should like to shake hands with him. [*Bowing to* ROXANE.] Good-bye.

Roxane. I will go with you to the door.

[DE GUICHE *bows to* LE BRET *and goes with* ROXANE *toward the terrace steps.*]

De Guiche [*stopping while she goes up the steps*]. Yes, sometimes I envy him. You see, when a man has succeeded too well in life, he is not unlikely to feel — dear me! without having committed any very serious wrong! — a multitudinous disgust of himself, the sum of which does not constitute a real remorse, but an obscure uneasiness; and a ducal mantle, while it sweeps up the stairs of greatness, may trail in its furry lining a rustling of sere illusions and regrets, as, when you slowly climb toward those doors, your black gown trails the withered leaves.

Roxane [*ironical*]. Are you not unusually pensive? . . .

De Guiche. Ah, yes! [*As he is about to leave, abruptly.*] Monsieur Le Bret [*To* ROXANE.] Will you allow me? A word. [*He goes to* LE BRET, *and lowering his voice.*] It is true that no one will dare overtly to attack your friend, but many have him in particular disrelish; and some one was saying to me yesterday, at the Queen's, "It seems not unlikely that this Cyrano will meet with an accident."

Le Bret. Ah? . . .

De Guiche. Yes. Let him keep indoors. Let him be cautious.

Le Bret [*lifting his arms toward Heaven*]. Cautious! . . . He is coming here. I will warn him. Warn him! . . . Yes, but . . .

Roxane [*who has been standing at the head of the steps, to a nun who comes toward her*]. What is it?

The Nun. Ragueneau begs to see you, Madame.

Roxane. Let him come in. [*To* DE GUICHE *and* LE BRET]. He comes to plead distress. Having determined one day to be an author, he became in turn precentor . . .

Le Bret. Bath-house keeper . . .

Roxane. Actor . . .

Le Bret. Beadle . . .

Roxane. Barber . . .

Le Bret. Arch-lute teacher . . .

Roxane. I wonder what he is now!

Ragueneau [*entering precipitately*]. Ah, madame! [*He sees* LE BRET.] Monsieur!

Roxane [*smiling*]. Begin telling your misfortunes to Le Bret. I am coming back.

Ragueneau. But, madame . . .

[ROXANE *leaves without listening, with the* DUKE. RAGUENEAU *goes to* LE BRET.]

Ragueneau. It is better so. Since you are here, I had liefer not tell her! Less than half an hour ago, I was going to see your friend. I was not thirty feet from his door, when I saw him come out. I hurried to catch up with him. He was about to turn the corner. I started to run, when from a window below which he was passing — was it pure mischance? It may have been! — a lackey drops a block of wood . . .

Le Bret. Ah, the cowards! . . . Cyrano!

Ragueneau. I reach the spot, and find him . . .

Le Bret. Horrible!

Ragueneau. Our friend, monsieur, our poet, stretched upon the ground, with a great hole in his head!

Le Bret. He is dead?

Ragueneau. No, but . . . God have mercy! I carried him to his lodging . . . Ah, his lodging! You should see that lodging of his!

Le Bret. Is he in pain?

Ragueneau. No, monsieur, he is unconscious.

Le Bret. Has a doctor seen him?

Ragueneau. One came . . . out of good nature.

Le Bret. My poor, poor Cyrano! . . . We must not tell Roxane outright. And the doctor? . . .

Ragueneau. He talked . . . I hardly grasped . . . of fever . . . cerebral inflammation! Ah, if you should see him, with his head done up in cloths! . . . Let us hurry . . . No one is there to tend him . . . And he might die if he attempted to get up!

Le Bret [*dragging* RAGUENEAU *off at the right*]. This way. Come, it is shorter through the chapel.

Roxane [*appearing at the head of the steps, catching sight of* LE BRET *hurrying off through the colonnade which leads to the chapel side-door*]. Monsieur Le Bret! [LE BRET *and* RAGUENEAU *make their escape without answering.*] Le Bret not turn-

ing back when he is called? . . . Poor Ragueneau must be in some new trouble! [*She comes down the steps.*] How beautiful . . . how beautiful, this golden-hazy waning day of September at its wane! My sorrowful mood, which the exuberant gladness of April offends, Autumn, the dreamy and subdued, lures on to smile . . . [*She sits down at her embroidery frame. Two* NUNS *come from the house bringing a large armchair which they place under the tree.*] Ah, here comes the classic armchair in which my old friend always sits!

Sister Martha. The best in the convent parlor!

Roxane. I thank you, sister. [*The nuns withdraw.*] He will be here in a moment. [*She adjusts the embroidery frame before her.*] There! The clock is striking . . . My wools! . . . The clock has struck? . . . I wonder at this! . . . Is it possible that for the first time he is late? . . . It must be that the sister who keeps the door . . . my thimble? ah, here it is! . . . is detaining him to exhort him to repentance . . . [*A pause.*] She exhorts him at some length! . . . He cannot be much longer . . . A withered leaf! [*She brushes away the dead leaf which has dropped on the embroidery.*] Surely nothing could keep . . . My scissors? . . . in my workbag! . . . could keep him from coming!

A Nun [*appearing at the head of the steps*]. Monsieur de Bergerac!

Roxane [*without turning round*]. What was I saying? . . . [*She begins to embroider.* CYRANO *appears, exceedingly pale, his hat drawn down over his eyes. The* NUN *who has shown him into the garden, withdraws. He comes down the steps very slowly, with evident difficulty to keep on his feet, leaning heavily on his cane.* ROXANE *proceeds with her sewing.*] Ah, these dull soft shades! . . . How shall I match them? [*To* CYRANO, *in a tone of friendly chiding.*] After fourteen years, for the first time you are late!

Cyrano [*who has reached the armchair and seated himself, in a jolly voice which contrasts with his face*]. Yes, it seems incredible! I am savage at it. I was detained, spite of all I could do! . . .

Roxane. By? . . .

Cyrano. A somewhat inopportune call.

Roxane [*absent-minded, sewing*]. Ah, yes . . . some troublesome fellow!

Cyrano. Cousin, it was a troublesome Madam.

Roxane. You excused yourself?

Cyrano. Yes. I said, "Your pardon, but this is Saturday, on which day I am due in a certain dwelling. On no account do I ever fail. Come back in an hour!"

Roxane [*lightly*]. Well, she will have to wait some time to see you. I shall not let you go before evening.

Cyrano. Perhaps . . . I shall have to go a little earlier.

[*He closes his eyes and is silent a moment.* SISTER MARTHA *is seen crossing the park from the chapel to the terrace.* ROXANE *sees her and beckons to her by a slight motion of her head.*]

Roxane [*to* CYRANO]. Are you not going to tease Sister Martha to-day?

Cyrano [*quickly, opening his eyes*]. I am indeed! [*In a comically gruff voice.*] Sister Martha, come nearer! [*The* NUN *demurely comes toward him.*] Ha! ha! ha! Beautiful eyes, ever studying the ground!

Sister Martha [*lifting her eyes and smiling*]. But . . . [*She sees his face and makes a gesture of surprise.*] Oh!

Cyrano [*low, pointing at* ROXANE]. Hush! . . . It is nothing! [*In a swaggering voice, aloud.*] Yesterday, I ate meat!

Sister Martha. I am sure you did! [*Aside.*] That is why he is so pale! [*Quickly, low.*] Come to the refectory presently. I shall have ready for you there a good bowl of broth . . . You will come!

Cyrano. Yes, yes, yes.

Sister Martha. Ah, you are more reasonable to-day!

Roxane [*hearing them whisper*]. She is trying to convert you?

Sister Martha. Indeed I am not!

Cyrano. It is true, you, usually almost discursive in the holy cause, are reading me no sermon! You amaze me! [*With comical fury.*] I will amaze you, too! Listen, you are authorized . . . [*With the air of casting about in his mind, and finding the jest he wants.*] Ah, now I shall amaze you! to . . . pray for me, this evening . . . in the chapel.

Roxane. Oh! oh!

Cyrano [*laughing*]. Sister Martha . . . lost in amazement!

Sister Martha [*gently*]. I did not wait for your authorization. [*She goes in.*]

Cyrano [*turning to* ROXANE, *who is bending over her embroidery*]. The devil, tapestry . . . the devil, if I hope to live to see the end of you!

Roxane. I was waiting for that jest.

[*A slight gust of wind makes the leaves fall.*]

Cyrano. The leaves!

Roxane [*looking up from her work and gazing off toward the avenues.*] They are the russet gold of a Venetian beauty's hair . . . Watch them fall!

Cyrano. How consummately they do it! In that brief fluttering from bough to ground, how they contrive still to put beauty! And though foredoomed to moulder upon the earth that draws them, they wish their fall invested with the grace of a free bird's flight!

Roxane. Serious, you?

Cyrano [*remembering himself*]. Not at all, Roxane!

Roxane. Come, never mind the falling leaves! Tell me the news, instead . . . Where is my budget?

Cyrano. Here it is!

Roxane. Ah!

Cyrano [*growing paler and paler, and struggling with pain*]. Saturday, the nineteenth: The king having filled his dish eight times with Cette preserves, and emptied it, was taken with a fever; his distemper, for high treason, was condemned to be let blood, and now the royal pulse is rid of febriculosity! On Sunday: at the Queen's great ball, were burned seven hundred and sixty-three wax candles; our troops, it is said, defeated Austrian John; four sorcerers were hanged; Madame Athis's little dog had a distressing turn, the case called for a . . .

Roxane. Monsieur de Bergerac, leave out the little dog!

Cyrano. Monday, . . . nothing, or next to it; Lygdamire took a fresh lover.

Roxane. Oh!

Cyrano [*over whose face is coming a change more and more marked*]. Tuesday: the whole Court assembled at Fontainebleau. Wednesday, the fair Monglat said to Count Fiesco "No!" Thursday, Mancini, Queen of France, . . . or little less. Twenty-fifth, the fair Monglat said to Count Fiesco "Yes!" And Saturday, the twenty-sixth . . . [*He closes his eyes. His head drops on his breast. Silence.*]

Roxane [*surprised at hearing nothing further, turns, looks at him and starts to her feet in alarm*]. Has he fainted? [*She runs to him, calling.*] Cyrano!

Cyrano [*opening his eyes, in a faint voice*]. What is it? . . . What is the matter! [*He sees* ROXANE *bending over him, hurriedly readjusts his hat, pulling it more closely over his head, and shrinks back in his armchair in terror.*] No! no! I assure you, it is nothing! . . . Do not mind me!

Roxane. But surely . . .

Cyrano. It is merely the wound I received at Arras . . . Sometimes . . . you know . . . even now . . .

Roxane. Poor friend!

Cyrano. But it is nothing . . . It will pass . . . [*He smiles with effort.*] It has passed.

Roxane. Each one of us has his wound: I too have mine. It is here, never to heal, that ancient wound . . . [*She places her hand on her breast.*] It is here, beneath the yellowing letter on which are still faintly visible tear-drops and drops of blood!

[*The light is beginning to grow less.*]

Cyrano. His letter? . . . Did you not once say that some day . . . you might show it to me?

Roxane. Ah! . . . Do you wish? . . . His letter?

Cyrano. Yes . . . to-day . . . I wish to . . .

Roxane [*handing him the little bag from her neck*]. Here!

Cyrano. I may open it?

Roxane. Open it . . . read!

[*She goes back to her embroidery frame, folds it up, orders her wools.*]

Cyrano. "Good-bye, Roxane! I am going to die!"

Roxane [*stopping in astonishment*]. You are reading it aloud?

Cyrano [*reading*]. "It is fated to come this evening, beloved, I believe! My soul is heavy, oppressed with love it had not time to utter . . . and now Time is at

end! Never again, never again shall my worshipping eyes . . ."

Roxane. How strangely you read his letter!

Cyrano [*continuing*]. ". . . whose passionate revel it was, kiss in its fleeting grace your every gesture. One, usual to you, of tucking back a little curl, comes to my mind . . . and I cannot refrain from crying out . . ."

Roxane. How strangely you read his letter! . . .

[*The darkness gradually increases.*]

Cyrano. "and I cry out: Good-bye!"

Roxane. You read it . . .

Cyrano. "my dearest, my darling, . . . my treasure . . ."

Roxane. . . in a voice . . .

Cyrano. ". . . my love! . . ."

Roxane. . . . in a voice . . . a voice which I am not hearing for the first time!

[Roxane *comes quietly nearer to him, without his seeing it; she steps behind his armchair, bends noiselessly over his shoulder, looks at the letter. The darkness deepens.*]

Cyrano. ". . . My heart never desisted for a second from your side . . . and I am and shall be in the world that has no end, the one who loved you without measure, the one . . ."

Roxane [*laying her hand on his shoulder*]. How can you go on reading? It is dark. [Cyrano *starts, and turns round; sees her close to him, makes a gesture of dismay and hangs his head. Then, in the darkness which has completely closed round them, she says slowly, clasping her hands.*] And he, for fourteen years, has played the part of the comical old friend who came to cheer me!

Cyrano. Roxane!

Roxane. So it was you.

Cyrano. No, no, Roxane!

Roxane. I ought to have divined it, if only by the way in which he speaks my name!

Cyrano. No, it was not I!

Roxane. So it was you!

Cyrano. I swear to you . . .

Roxane. Ah, I detect at last the whole generous imposture: The letters . . . were yours!

Cyrano. No!

Roxane. The tender fancy, the dear folly, . . . yours!

Cyrano. No!

Roxane. The voice in the night, was yours!

Cyrano. I swear to you that it was not!

Roxane. The soul . . . was yours!

Cyrano. I did not love you, no!

Roxane. And you loved me!

Cyrano. Not I . . . it was the other!

Roxane. You loved me!

Cyrano. No!

Roxane. Already your denial comes more faintly!

Cyrano. No, no, my darling love, I did not love you!

Roxane. Ah, how many things within the hour have died . . . how many have been born! Why, why have . . . been silent these long years, when on this letter, in which he had no part, the tears were yours?

Cyrano [*handing her the letter*]. Because . . . the blood was his.

Roxane. Then why let the sublime bond of this silence be loosed to-day?

Cyrano. Why?

[Le Bret *and* Ragueneau *enter running.*]

Le Bret. Madness! Monstrous madness! . . . Ah, I was sure of it! There he is!

Cyrano [*smiling and straightening himself*]. *Tiens!* Where else?

Le Bret. Madame, he is likely to have got his death by getting out of bed!

Roxane. Merciful God! A moment ago, then . . . that faintness . . . that . . . ?

Cyrano. It is true. I had not finished telling you the news. And on Saturday, the twenty-sixth, an hour after sundown, Monsieur de Bergerac died of murder done upon him. [*He takes off his hat; his head is seen wrapped in bandages.*]

Roxane. What is he saying? . . . Cyrano? . . . Those bandages about his head? . . . Ah, what have they done to you? . . . Why? . . .

Cyrano. "Happy who falls, cut off by a hero, with an honest sword through his heart!" I am quoting from myself! . . . Fate will have his laugh at us! . . . Here am I killed, in a trap, from behind, by a lackey, with a log! Nothing could be completer! In my whole life I shall have

not had anything I wanted . . . not even a decent death!

Ragueneau. Ah, monsieur! . . .

Cyrano. Ragueneau, do not sob like that! [*Holding out his hand to him.*] And what is the news with you, these latter days, fellow-poet?

Ragueneau [*through his tears*]. I am candle-snuffer at Molière's theatre.

Cyrano. Molière!

Ragueneau. But I intend to leave no later than to-morrow. Yes, I am indignant! Yesterday, they were giving Scapin, and I saw that he has appropriated a scene of yours.

Le Bret. A whole scene?

Ragueneau. Yes, monsieur. The one in which occurs the famous "What the devil was he doing in . . ."

Le Bret. Molière has taken that from you!

Cyrano. Hush! hush! He did well to take it! [*To* RAGUENEAU.] The scene was very effective, was it not?

Ragueneau. Ah, monsieur, the public laughed . . . laughed!

Cyrano. Yes, to the end, I shall have been the one who prompted . . . and was forgotten! [*To* ROXANE.] Do you remember that evening on which Christian spoke to you from below the balcony? There was the epitome of my life: while I have stood below in darkness, others have climbed to gather the kiss and glory! It is well done, and on the brink of my grave I approve it: Molière has genius . . . Christian was a fine fellow! [*At this moment, the chapel bell having rung, the* NUNS *are seen passing at the back, along the avenue, on their way to service.*] Let them hasten to their prayers . . . the bell is summoning them . . .

Roxane [*rising and calling*]. Sister! Sister!

Cyrano [*holding her back*]. No! No! do not leave me to fetch anybody! When you came back I might not be here to rejoice . . . [*The* NUNS *have gone into the chapel; the organ is heard.*] I longed for a little music . . . it comes in time!

Roxane. I love you . . . you shall live!

Cyrano. No! for it is only in the fairy-tale that the shy and awkward prince when he hears the beloved say "I love you!" feels his ungainliness melt and drop from him in the sunshine of those words! . . . But you would always know full well, dear heart, that there had taken place in your poor slave no beautifying change!

Roxane. I have hurt you . . . I have wrecked your life, I! . . . I!

Cyrano. You? . . . The reverse! Woman's sweetness I had never known. My mother . . . thought me unflattering. I had no sister. Later, I shunned Love's crossroad in fear of mocking eyes. To you I owe having had, at least, among the gentle and fair, a friend. Thanks to you there has passed across my life the rustle of a woman's gown.

Le Bret [*calling his attention to the moonlight peering through the branches*]. Your other friend, among the gentle and fair, is there . . . she comes to see you!

Cyrano [*smiling to the moon*]. I see her!

Roxane. I never loved but one . . . and twice I lose him!

Cyrano. Le Bret, I shall ascend into the opalescent moon, without need this time of a flying-machine!

Roxane. What are you saying?

Cyrano. Yes, it is there, you may be sure, I shall be sent for my Paradise. More than one soul of those I have loved must be apportioned there . . . There I shall find Socrates and Galileo!

Le Bret [*in revolt*]. No! No! It is too senseless, too cruel, too unfair! So true a poet! So great a heart! To die . . . like this! To die! . . .

Cyrano. As ever . . . Le Bret is grumbling!

Le Bret [*bursting into tears*]. My friend! My friend!

Cyrano [*lifting himself, his eyes wild*]. They are the Gascony Cadets! . . . Man in the gross . . . Eh, yes! . . . the weakness of the weakest point . . .

Le Bret. Learned . . . even in his delirium! . . .

Cyrano. Copernicus said . . .

Roxane. Oh!

Cyrano. But what the devil was he doing . . . and what the devil was he doing in that galley?

Philosopher and physicist,
Musician, rhymester, duellist,
Explorer of the upper blue,
Retorter apt with point and point,

Lover as well,—not for his peace!
Here lies Hercule Savinien
De Cyrano de Bergerac,
Who was everything . . . but of account! But, your pardons, I must go . . . I wish to keep no one waiting . . . See, a moon-beam, come to take me home! [*He has dropped in his chair;* ROXANE'S *weeping calls him back to reality; he looks at her and gently strokes her mourning veil.*] I do not wish . . . indeed, I do not wish . . . that you should sorrow less for Christian, the comely and the kind! Only I wish that when the everlasting cold shall have seized upon my fibres, this funereal veil should have a twofold meaning, and the mourning you wear for him be worn for me too . . . a little!

Roxane. I promise . . .

Cyrano [*seized with a great shivering, starts to his feet*]. Not there! No! Not in an elbow-chair! [*All draw nearer to help him.*] Let no one stay me! No one! [*He goes and stands against the tree.*] Nothing but this tree! [*Silence.*] She comes, Mors, the indiscriminate Madam! . . . Already I am booted with marble . . . gauntleted with lead! [*He stiffens himself.*] Ah, since she is on her way, I will await her standing . . . [*He draws his sword.*] Sword in hand!

Le Bret. Cyrano!

Roxane [*swooning*]. Cyrano!

[*All start back, terrified.*]

Cyrano. I believe she is looking at me . . . that she dares to look at my nose, the bony baggage who has none! [*He raises his sword.*] What are you saying? That it is no use? . . . I know it! But one does not fight because there is hope of winning! No! . . . no! . . . it is much finer to fight when it is no use! . . . What are all those? You are a thousand strong? . . . Ah, I know you now . . . all my ancient enemies! . . . Hypocrisy? . . . [*He beats with his sword, in the vacancy.*] Take this! and this! Ha! Ha! Compromises? . . . and Prejudices? and dastardly Expedients? [*He strikes.*] That I should come to terms, I? . . . Never! Never! . . . Ah, you are there too, you, bloated and pompous Silliness! I know full well that you will lay me low at last . . . No matter: whilst I have breath, I will fight you, I will fight you, I will fight you! [*He waves his sword in great sweeping circles, and stops, panting.*] Yes, you have wrested from me everything, laurel as well as rose . . . Work your wills! . . . Spite of your worst, something will still be left me to take whither I go . . . and to-night when I enter God's house, in saluting, broadly will I sweep the azure threshold with what in spite of all I carry forth unblemished and unbent . . . [*He starts forward, with lifted sword.*] . . . and that is . . .

[*The sword falls from his hands, he staggers, drops in the arms of* LE BRET *and* RAGUENEAU.]

Roxane [*bending over him and kissing his forehead*]. That is? . . .

Cyrano [*opens his eyes again, recognizes her and says with a smile*]. . . . My plume!

THE END

LIGHT-O'-LOVE

(LIEBELEI)

By ARTHUR SCHNITZLER

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ARTHUR SCHNITZLER AND HIS PLAYS

Arthur Schnitzler, the author of *Light-o'-Love,* the greatest dramatist of Austria since Grillparzer, was born in Vienna, and was graduated from the University of Vienna in 1885 as a doctor of medicine. Like Tchekhov, the Russian dramatist, who was also a physician, he practiced his profession with ardor and success, and, as was also the case with Tchekhov, that profession has strongly influenced his plays. Like Tchekhov, too, he has become famous as writer of fiction as well as a dramatist. Schnitzler is a pure naturalist, recording life dispassionately as he sees it, without bias, but with all the subtle insight into the springs of action and all the tolerant understanding characteristic of a physician who is also a psychologist. He is as far as possible removed from the reformers; for he has not even any explanation of life, any "synthesis", any "philosophy". He is calmly contemplative, but he is not devoid of pity and sympathy; he is even, at times, not without tenderness. He maintains in turn two very different points of view as he surveys the world of human beings. From one he sees amusing creatures disporting themselves, a careless, graceful, sophisticated set, yet even in their careless play suggesting how easily their comedy may turn to tragedy. From the other, he sees rather care-worn men and women seeking a way out of life's perplexities, suffering from its disillusions. The merely careless ones he pictures in such plays as *Anatol;* the tired and disillusioned, in *The Lonely Way.* Such plays, whether humorous or tragic, are a characteristic product of mid-Europe; they spring from the soil of an old and sophisticated civilization; they disregard, perhaps they are not even aware of, the "moral standards" in sex that dictate the conventions of younger and more self-conscious peoples; and at times they show a certain weariness and disillusionment antipathetic to more näive and optimistic civilizations.

Schnitzler handles his technique with the ease of a virtuoso. It is more successful, perhaps, in the one-act form (of which he is the acknowledged living master), as is shown in *Literature* and *Living Hours.* Technically, his most distinctive achievement is his brilliant dialogue, graceful, witty, cynical, the best of its kind in modern continental drama, a dialogue that has exercised a profound influence upon, for instance, Benavente. Yet, in spite of the distinguished ease with which he moves in the world of the careless, cynical, sophisticated persons who use such speech, he seems still more at home in "the twilight of the soul", a world in which regret for past deeds, hopeless desires, inhibitions that strangle and destroy, create an atmosphere of half-lights, some of which seem to be cast from a realm of the sub-conscious just beyond the threshold. Here Schnitzler is of the "new psychology"; and the very half-tones, reticences, and suggestions of his delicate method often say more than the most voluble speech.

Light-o'-Love represents a mean between the tone and method of *Anatol* and those of *The Lonely Way.* It has much of the grace and charm of the one and something of the regret and disillusionment of the other. It shows how close the comedy of the careless is to the sheer tragedy of the disillusioned. In spite of the profound social changes in Austria within the past two decades, it retains its power, since this is founded upon its subtle and sympathetic delineation of permanent and universal human traits.

Light-o'-Love was produced first in Vienna at the Hofburg theater in October, 1895. Its first production in English was in New York in February, 1905, under the title of *Flirtation,* by the Progressive Stage Society. Under the Title of *The Reckoning* it was again produced in New York in 1907, and still again, this time in German, in 1912. In the meantime it had been produced in English in London in May, 1909. A recent revival (1929) has been made in New York under the title *Playing with Love.*

CHARACTERS

HANS VYRING, *violinist at the city theatre*
CHRISTINE, *his daughter*
TONI SCHLAGER, *milliner*
CATHERINE BINDER, *wife of a stocking-maker*
LENA, *her nine-year-old daughter*
FRITZ LOHEIMER, THEODORE KAISER, } *young men*
A GENTLEMAN

The action takes place in Vienna at the present day

LIGHT-O'-LOVE

ACT ONE

FRITZ'S *room. Cozy but elegantly furnished.*

Theodore. [*Enters in advance. He carries a stick, has an overcoat flung over his arm; takes off his hat upon entering.*]

Fritz. [*Outside.*] So nobody has been here?

Voice. No, sir.

Fritz. [*Entering.*] I suppose we might let the carriage go?

Theodore. Of course. I thought you had.

Fritz. [*Goes to the door.*] Send the carriage away. And . . . you can go, too. I don't need you any more. [*Returning.*] Why don't you lay down your things?

Theodore. [*At the desk.*] Here are a couple of letters. [*Throws coat and hat on a chair, keeps his stick.*]

Fritz. [*Hastens to the desk.*] Oh! . . .

Theodore. Now, now! . . . I believe you're frightened!

Fritz. From dad. . . . [*Opens a second letter.*] From Lensky.

Theodore. Don't let me disturb you.

Fritz. [*Skims the letters.*]

Theodore. What does your father say?

Fritz. Nothing special. . . . He wants me to spend a week on the estate at Whitsuntide.

Theodore. Excellent plan. I'd like to send you there for six months.

Fritz. [*Turns to face him.*]

Theodore. I certainly would!—riding, driving, fresh air, dairy-maids——

Fritz. Idiot, there aren't any dairy-farms out there.

Theodore. Well, you know what I mean, don't you?

Fritz. Will you come along?

Theodore. You know I can't.

Fritz. Why not?

Theodore. My dear fellow, I have my doctor's exam. coming! If I went along, it would be only for the sake of keeping you there.

Fritz. Oh, come, you needn't worry about me.

Theodore. You see, all you need is fresh air; I'm convinced of that—I saw that today. Out yonder in the open where we found the genuine green springtime, you were a very pleasant fellow again.

Fritz. Thanks.

Theodore. And now—now of course you are collapsing. We're too close to the dangerous atmospheric zone again.

Fritz. [*Makes a gesture of irritation.*]

Theodore. Why, you've no idea how jolly you were out there. You were actually reasonable for once; it was like the good old days. And then a couple of days ago, when we were out with those two jolly little girls, you were very nice; but now—that's all over again, and you find it absolutely necessary to think—[*With ironical pathos.*]—of that woman.

Fritz. [*Rises, vexed.*]

Theodore. You don't know me, my dear fellow. I don't intend to stand that any longer.

Fritz. My goodness, but you're ambitious!

Theodore. Oh, I don't demand of you that you forget—[*as before*]—that woman. . . . I only hope—[*warmly*]—my dear Fritz, that this miserable affair, that keeps me trembling for you all the time, means no more to you than any trivial love affair. . . . Look here, Fritz, some day, when you stop worshipping "that woman," you'll be surprised how congenial she is to you. Then you'll find out that there's nothing demoniac in her at all, but that she is a very sweet little woman—one that you can have plenty of fun with, just as you can with all women that are young and pretty, and that have a little temperament.

Fritz. Why do you say "tremble for me"?

Theodore. You know why. . . . I must confess that I am in constant terror that you will run off with her some fine day.

Fritz. That was what you meant?

Theodore. [*After a short pause.*] That isn't the only danger.

Fritz. Right you are, Theodore—there are others, too.

Theodore. But then we never do anything silly.

Fritz. [*To himself.*] There are others, too. . . .

Theodore. What's the matter? . . . You're thinking of something in particular.

Fritz. Oh, no, I'm not . . . [*Glances at the window.*] She was deceived once before.

Theodore. What? . . . What's that? . . . I don't understand you.

Fritz. Oh, nothing.

Theodore. What? Do talk sense.

Fritz. She's been afraid lately . . . at times.

Theodore. Why? — There must be a reason for it.

Fritz. Not at all. Nervousness—[*ironically*]—an uneasy conscience, if you will.

Theodore. You say she was deceived once——

Fritz. Well, yes—and again to-day, I suppose.

Theodore. To-day—well, what does all this mean?

Fritz. [*After a slight pause.*] She thinks . . . we are watched.

Theodore. What?

Fritz. She sees apparitions; really, she has actual hallucinations. [*At the window.*] She sees some person standing on the street corner, . . . through the crack in the curtain, and thinks——[*Breaks off.*] Is it possible, anyway, to recognize a face at this distance?

Theodore. Scarcely.

Fritz. Why, that's what I say. But then that's terrible. She's afraid to go out; she has all sorts of queer feelings; she gets hysterical; she wants to die with me——

Theodore. Of course.

Fritz. [*Short pause.*] To-day I had to go down and take a look. Went down as cheerfully as if I were leaving the house alone; of course there wasn't a familiar face to be seen anywhere. . . .

Theodore. [*Is silent.*]

Fritz. Well, that ought to set fears at rest, oughtn't it? A man can't suddenly be swallowed up by the earth, hey? . . . Answer, can't you?

Theodore. What sort of an answer do you want? Of course a man can't be swallowed up. But a man can hide inside the gates.

Fritz. I looked behind them all.

Theodore. You must have looked very innocent at that.

Fritz. There was nobody there. I tell you it's hallucinations.

Theodore. Certainly. But it ought to teach you to be more careful.

Fritz. And I couldn't have helped knowing it, if he suspected it. Why, I ate supper with them yesterday after the play—with him and her—and it was so pleasant! . . . ridiculous, I tell you!

Theodore. I beg of you Fritz, be sensible; do me that favor. Give up this whole cursed affair, for my sake, if nothing else. I have nerves, too . . . I know you're not the kind of man who can escape from such an affair unaided, and so I made it so easy for you—gave you a chance to save yourself by starting another . . .

Fritz. You did?

Theodore. Well, didn't I take you along with me when I had an appointment with little Miss Toni a while back? And didn't I ask her to bring along her prettiest friend? And can you deny that you like her?

Fritz. Certainly, she is sweet! . . . So sweet! And you have no idea how I longed for such an affection as that, so sweet and quiet, that would hover about me and soothe me, and help me to recover from these everlasting irritations and torments.

Theodore. That's exactly it. Recover! That's the deeper purpose of it. They help us to recover. That's why I'm against these so-called interesting women. It's not the business of women to be interesting, but to be agreeable. You must seek happiness where I have sought and found it—where there are no grand scenes, no dangers, no tragic entanglements—where the beginning has no special difficulties, and the ending no torments—where you take your first kiss with a smile, and part with very gentle emotion.

Fritz. Yes, that's it.

Theodore. Those women are so happy in their healthy every-day womanhood—what compels us to make demons or angels out of them at all cost?

Fritz. She is really a treasure. So affectionate, so dear. Often it seems to me she is too dear for me.

Theodore. You're incorrigible, apparently. If you intend to take that affair seriously again. . . .

Fritz. No, no, not a thought of it. We are agreed, I need to recover.

Theodore. If you did, I'd give you up for good. I've had enough of your love-tragedies. You bore me with them. And if you feel like coming at me with your famous "conscience," I'll give you my simple rule for treating such cases: Better it were I than some one else. For that "some one else" is as sure as fate itself.

[*There is a ring.*]

Fritz. What's that now? . . .

Theodore. Go and see. There you are, all pale again! Set your fears at rest. It's the two sweet little girls.

Fritz. [*Agreeably surprised.*] What?

Theodore. I took the liberty of inviting them here to-day.

Fritz. [*Going out.*] Oh, you—why didn't you tell me? Now I've sent away my man.

Theodore. So much the cozier.

Fritz. [*Outside.*] Greetings, Toni.

Toni. [*Enters, carrying a package.*]

Fritz. [*Re-enters behind her.*] And where's Christine?

Toni. She'll be here soon. Greetings, Dore.

Theodore. [*Kisses her hand.*]

Toni. You'll have to excuse us, Mr. Fritz; but Theodore invited us. . . .

Fritz. Why, it was a splendid idea. Only he forgot something, Theodore did.

Theodore. Theodore forgot nothing! [*Takes the package from* Toni.] Did you bring everything I wrote down for you?

Toni. Of course. [*To* Fritz.] Where can I put it?

Fritz. Just give it to me, Toni; we'll put it on the sideboard for the present.

Toni. I bought something else, Dore, besides what you told me.

Fritz. Give me your hat, Toni, that's right. [*Lays it on the piano, also her boa.*]

Theodore. [*Dubiously.*] What?

Toni. A coffee cream-cake.

Theodore. Oh, what a sweet tooth!

Fritz. Well, but tell me, why didn't Christine come with you?

Toni. She's going to take her father to the theatre first. Then she'll come along on the street car.

Theodore. What an affectionate daughter! . . .

Toni. I should say so, and especially since he went into mourning.

Theodore. Why, who died there, anyway?

Toni. The old gentleman's sister.

Theodore. Ah, a widow?

Toni. No, it was an old maiden lady, who has lived with them always. Well, and so he feels so lonesome, somehow.

Theodore. He's a little man with short gray hair—her father—isn't he?

Toni. [*Shakes her head.*] No, he has long hair.

Fritz. How do you come to know him?

Theodore. Recently I was in the theatre with Lensky, and I took a look at the men playing the bass-viols.

Toni. Why, he doesn't play the bass-viol—he plays the violin.

Theodore. Oh, is that so? I thought he played the bass-viol. [Toni *laughs.*] Nothing funny about that; how should I know, child?

Toni. What a beautiful place you have, Mr. Fritz—just wonderful! What view is that?

Fritz. This window opens on Straw Lane, and in the next room ——

Theodore. [*Quickly.*] Do tell me, why are you so formal, you two?

Toni. At supper we'll get better acquainted.

Theodore. A lady of principle, I see. Well, that's some comfort, just the same. How's your mother, anyhow?

Toni. [*Turns to him, her face suddenly showing concern.*] Only think, she's got ——

Theodore. Toothache, I know, I know. Your mother always has the toothache. She ought to go to a dentist one of these times.

Toni. But the doctor says it's only rheumatic pains.

Theodore. [*Laughing.*] Well, if it's rheumatic . . .

Toni. [*An album in her hand.*] Nothing but pretty things. [*Turning the pages.*] Who is that? . . . Why, that's you, Mr. Fritz, . . . in uniform? You're in the army?

Fritz. Yes.

Toni. Dragoon!—Are you in the yellows or the blacks?

Fritz. [*Smiling.*] In the yellows.

Toni. [*As in a reverie.*] The yellows.

Theodore. There she goes a-dreaming. Wake up, Toni!

Toni. But now you're lieutenant in the reserves?

Fritz. Surely.

Toni. You must look very nice in the fur cap.

Theodore. How much she knows about it! —Look here, Toni, I'm in the army, too.

Toni. Are you in the dragoons, too?

Theodore. Yes.

Toni. Well, why can't you tell a body that?

Theodore. I want to be loved for myself.

Toni. Come, Dore, you must put on your uniform some time when we're going out together.

Theodore. In August there will be manoeuvers, anyway.

Toni. Heavens! by August——

Theodore. Yes, that's so—eternal love doesn't last that long.

Toni. Who thinks about August in May? Isn't that so, Mr. Fritz?—Say, Mr. Fritz, why did you run away from us yesterday?

Fritz. What do you mean?

Toni. Why—after the play.

Fritz. Didn't Theodore make my excuses to you?

Theodore. To be sure, I excused you.

Toni. What good do your excuses do me, or rather Christine? When a man makes a promise, he ought to keep it.

Fritz. I really would rather have gone with you.

Toni. Really?

Fritz. But I couldn't. You saw yourselves I was in a box with friends, and afterward I couldn't get away from them.

Toni. Yes, you couldn't get away from the pretty ladies. Do you think we didn't see you from the gallery?

Fritz. Well, I saw you, too.

Toni. You were sitting backwards in the box.

Fritz. Not all the time.

Toni. But most of it. Behind a lady with a black velvet dress you sat and kept —[*Imitating.*]—looking forward like this.

Fritz. You must have watched me closely.

Toni. Why, it's nothing to me. But if I were Christine . . . Why did Theodore have time after the play? Why doesn't he have to take supper with friends?

Theodore. [*Proudly.*] Why don't I have to take supper with friends?

[*There is a ring.* FRITZ *hastens out.*]

Theodore. Toni, you can do me a favor.

Toni. [*Assumes questioning expression.*]

Theodore. Forget your military recollections—at least, for a time.

Toni. Why, I haven't any.

Theodore. Come, now, you didn't learn all that just by accident, that's plain enough.

Christine. [*Enters with flowers in her hand.* FRITZ *behind her. With a trace of embarrassment.*] Good-evening. [*General salutation. To* FRITZ.] Are you glad we came—You're not angry?

Fritz. But—my dear child! Sometimes, you know Theodore is cleverer than I am.

Theodore. Well, is your father fiddling by now?

Christine. Surely; I took him to the theatre.

Fritz. Toni told us.

Christine. [*To* TONI.] And Catherine stopped me, too.

Toni. Oh, pshaw! the false cat!

Christine. Oh, no, she isn't false at all; she is very good to me.

Toni. You trust every one, anyway.

Christine. Why should she be false to me?

Fritz. Who is Catherine?

Toni. The wife of a stocking-maker; and she's always vexed because some girls are younger than she is.

Christine. Why, she's quite young herself.

Fritz. Bother Catherine!—What have you got there?

Christine. I brought along a few flowers for you.

Fritz. [*Takes them from her and kisses her hand.*] You're a little angel. Here, we'll put them in the vase.

Theodore. No, no! You've no talent as decorator. The flowers will be scattered at random on the table. . . . That is, later on, when the table is set. We really ought to fix it so that they would fall from the ceiling. But that can't be done.

Fritz. [*Laughing.*] Scarcely.

Theodore. Meanwhile we'll put them in here, after all. [*Puts them into the vase.*]

Toni. Children, it's getting dark!

Fritz. [*Helps* CHRISTINE *to take off her coat, and she takes off her hat. He puts*

hat and coat on a chair in the background.] We'll light the lamp right away.

Theodore. Lamp! I should say not! Candles we must have. Their light is so much prettier. Come, Toni, you can help me. [*He and* Toni *light the candles, in the branched candelabra before the pier-glass, one on the desk, two candles on the sideboard. Meanwhile* Fritz *and* Christine *converse.*]

Fritz. How are you, sweetheart?

Christine. I'm all right now.

Fritz. Well, but not at other times?

Christine. I have longed so for you.

Fritz. Why, we saw each other only yesterday.

Christine. Saw each other . . . from away off. . . . [*Shyly.*] Fritz, it wasn't very nice of you to . . .

Fritz. Yes, I know; Toni told me. But you're always a child. I couldn't get away. You've got to understand such things.

Christine. Yes. . . . Fritz, . . . who were the people in the box?

Fritz. Friends of mine—it doesn't matter what their names are.

Christine. Well, who was the lady in the black velvet dress?

Fritz. Child, I have no memory for dresses.

Christine. [*Coaxingly.*] Come, come!

Fritz. That is to say, . . . I do have a sort of a memory for them—in certain cases. For example, I remember very well that dark-blue waist you had on the first time we saw each other. And the black and white one you wore to the theatre yesterday.

Christine. Why, I'm wearing it to-day!

Fritz. Sure enough; . . . from the distance, you know, it looks different—I mean it! Oh, and that medallion—I know that, too.

Christine. [*Smiling.*] When did I wear that?

Fritz. Oh,—that time we went walking in the public gardens, where all the children were playing—isn't that right?

Christine. Yes . . . So you do think of me sometimes?

Fritz. Rather frequently, my child.

Christine. Not so often as I think of you. I am always thinking of you . . . all day long; . . . and I can only be happy when I see you.

Fritz. Then don't we see each other often enough?

Christine. Often . . .

Fritz. Certainly. In the summer we shan't see each other so much. Just think! Suppose, for example, I went away for a couple of weeks—what would you say?

Christine. [*Anxiously.*] What? You are going away?

Fritz. No. . . . And still it might be possible that I would like the notion of being all alone for a week.

Christine. Oh, why?

Fritz. I'm simply talking about possibilities. I know myself, I get such notions. And you, too, might some time take the whim of not wanting to see me for a few days. . . . I'll always understand that.

Christine. No, I'll never have that whim, Fritz.

Fritz. You can't tell about that.

Christine. But I can. . . . I love you.

Fritz. I love you, too, very much.

Christine. But you are everything to me, Fritz; for you I could——[*Breaks off.*] No, I can't imagine an hour ever coming when I wouldn't want to see you. As long as I live, Fritz——

Fritz. [*Interrupts.*] Child, I beseech you, . . . don't say anything like that. . . . I don't like big words. We won't talk about eternity.

Christine. [*Smiling sadly.*] Have no fear, Fritz. . . . I know this can't be for always.

Fritz. You misunderstand me, child. Of course it's possible—[*Laughing.*]—that we simply won't be able to live without each other, but we can't tell for sure, can we? We're only human.

Theodore. [*Pointing to the lighted candles.*] Kindly turn your eyes upon that. . . . Isn't that different from a stupid lamp?

Fritz. You're really a born decorator.

Theodore. Children, what do you say—shall we think about eating?

Toni. Yes! . . . Come, Christine.

Fritz. Wait; I'll show you where to find everything.

Toni. First of all, we need a table-cloth.

Theodore. [*With German accent, as on the vaudeville stage.*] "A table-clot'?"

Fritz. What?

Theodore. Don't you remember that fellow in the Orpheum? "Dot is a table-clot'."

"Dot is a shtool." "Dot is a liddle piannino."

Toni. Say, Dore, when are you going to the Orpheum with me? You promised me a little while ago. Then Christine will come along, and Mr. Fritz, too. [*She is just taking from* Fritz *the table-cloth which he has taken out of the sideboard.*] Then we'll be your friends in the box.

Fritz. Yes, yes.

Toni. Then the lady with the black velvet dress can go home alone.

Fritz. Why do you keep thinking about that lady in black? It's too stupid.

Toni. Oh, we don't think about her. . . . There. . . . And the silver? [Fritz *shows her the things in the open sideboard.*] Yes. . . . And the plates? . . . Yes, thanks. . . . There, now we can do it alone all right. Go, go away now, you're only getting in our way.

Theodore. [*Has meanwhile stretched out on the couch;* Fritz *advances toward him.*] You'll excuse me.

Toni. Did you see the picture of Fritz in his uniform?

Christine. No.

Toni. You must have a look at it. Swell! [*They talk on.*]

Theodore. Such evenings are my delight, Fritz.

Fritz. Well, they are nice.

Theodore. Then I feel so cozy. . . . Don't you?

Fritz. Oh, I wish I could always feel so contented.

Toni. Tell me, Mr. Fritz, is there coffee in the machine?

Fritz. Yes. You can start the lamp under it right away—it takes a good hour on that machine, before the coffee is done.

Theodore. I'd give a dozen demoniac women for a sweet girl like that.

Fritz. There's no comparison.

Theodore. You see, we hate the women that we love—and only love the women that are indifferent to us.

Fritz. [*Laughs.*]

Toni. What's the joke? We'd like to hear it, too.

Theodore. Nothing for you, children. We're philosophizing.—If this were to be our last meeting with these girls, we'd be just as jolly, wouldn't we?

Fritz. The last time? . . . Well, there's certainly something melancholy about that. Parting always gives pain, even if you've been looking forward to it eagerly for a long time.

Christine. Say, Fritz, where's the small silver?

Fritz. [*Goes rear to the sideboard.*] Here it is, sweetheart.

Toni. [*Comes forward, runs her hand through* Theodore's *hair; he still reclining on the couch.*]

Theodore. You pussy-cat!

Fritz. [*Opens the package* Toni *brought.*] Grand!

Christine. [*To* Fritz.] You have everything in such good order.

Fritz. Yes. [*Arranges the things.* Toni *brought — sardines, cold meat, butter, cheese.*]

Christine. Fritz . . . won't you tell me?

Fritz. Tell you what?

Christine. [*Very timidly.*] Who the lady was.

Fritz. No; don't make me cross. [*More gently.*] You see, that's one thing we agreed upon expressly: No questions asked. That's the nice thing about it. When I am with you the world disappears, like that—— [*Snaps his fingers.*] I don't ask you any questions, either.

Christine. You can ask me anything you like.

Fritz. But I don't. I don't want to know anything.

Toni. [*Returns to table.*] Goodness, what a mess you're making! [*Takes the edibles, puts them on the plates.*] There. . . .

Theodore. Say, Fritz, have you anything to drink here?

Fritz. Oh, yes, I think I can find something. [*Exit into front room.*]

Theodore. [*Raises himself and inspects the table.*] Good.

Toni. There, I think we've got everything now.

Fritz. [*Returns with some bottles.*] Here's something to drink, too.

Theodore. Where are the roses that fall from the ceiling?

Toni. That's right, we forgot the roses. [*She takes the roses out of the vase, climbs on a chair, and lets the roses fall on the table.*] There!

Christine. My, what a wild girl you are to-night!

Theodore. Here, not on the plates.

Fritz. Where do you want to sit, Christine?

Theodore. Where is the cork-screw?

Fritz. [*Gets one from the sideboard.*] Here is one.

Toni. [*Tries to open a bottle.*]

Fritz. No, let me do that.

Theodore. No, let me do it. . . . [*Takes bottle and cork-screw from him.*] Meanwhile you might——[*Moves his fingers as at the piano.*]

Toni. Yes, yes, that's grand! . . . [*She runs to the piano, takes the things off it, and opens it.*]

Fritz. [*To Christine.*] Shall I?

Christine. Oh, please do, I've wanted that for so long.

Fritz. [*At the piano.*] You can play a little too?

Christine. [*With a gesture.*] Oh goodness.

Toni. She plays fine, Christine does. . . . she can sing too.

Fritz. Really? You never told me that.

Christine. Did you ever ask me?

Fritz. Where did you learn to sing?

Christine. I really never learned. Father taught me a little—but I haven't got much voice. And you know, since auntie died, the one that always lived with us, it's even quieter at home than it was before.

Fritz. What do you do, anyway, all day long?

Christine. Oh, I have plenty to do!

Fritz. Around the house, I suppose?

Christine. Yes. And then I copy notes quite a lot.

Theodore. Music notes?

Christine. Surely.

Theodore. They must pay you tremendously for that. [*The others laugh.*] Well, I'd pay tremendously for it. Music copying must be a terrible task, I think.

Toni. There's no sense in her working so hard, either. If I had as much voice as you have, I'd have been in the theatre long ago.

Theodore. You wouldn't even need a voice. . . . Of course you do nothing all day, hey?

Toni. Well, I like that! I have two little brothers that are going to school. I have to dress them in the morning. And then I help them with their lessons——

Theodore. That's a lie, every word of it.

Toni. Well, if you won't believe me.—And until last autumn I was in a store from eight in the morning till eight at night.

Theodore. [*Mockingly.*] Where was that?

Toni. In a millinery store. Mother wants me to go back there.

Theodore. [*As above.*] Why did you leave it?

Fritz. [*To Christine.*] Then you must sing something for us.

Theodore. Come on, children, let's eat first, and then you'll play, won't you?

Fritz. [*Rising, to* Christine.] Come, sweetheart. [*Leads her to the table.*]

Toni. The coffee! There's the coffee boiling over, and we haven't begun to eat.

Theodore. Nothing matters now.

Toni. But it's boiling over! [*Blows out the flame.*]

[*All sit down at the table.*]

Theodore. What will you have, Toni? But let me tell you this: the cake comes last! . . . First you've got to eat nothing but sour things.

Fritz. [*Pours out the wine.*]

Theodore. Not that way: we do it differently now. Don't you know the latest fashion? [*Stands up, affects magniloquence; to* Christine, *bottle in hand.*] Special quality, genuine Johannisberger, eighteen hundred——[*Mumbles the last figures. Fills glass, then goes to* Toni, *to* Fritz, *repeating the same ceremony and words; finally stands at his own place, and repeats as before. Seats himself.*]

Toni. [*Laughing.*] He's always doing something silly.

Theodore. [*Raises his glass; all clink.*] Prosit.

Toni. Your health, Theodore.

Theodore. [*Rising.*] Ladies and Gentlemen . . .

Fritz. Oh, not yet!

Theodore. [*Sits again.*] Well, I can wait.

Toni. Oh, that's what I like,—after-dinner speeches. I have a cousin that always makes his speeches in rhymes.

Theodore. What regiment is he in?

Toni. Come, stop that . . . He talks if off by heart and in rhyme, and it's just splendid, Christine. And he's an elderly gentleman now, too.

Theodore. Oh, it sometimes happens that elderly gentlemen can still talk in rhyme.

Fritz. But you're not drinking at all, Christine! [*Clinks with her.*]

Theodore. [*Clinks with* TONI.] To the old gentleman who talks in rhymes.

Toni. [*Merrily.*] To the young gentlemen, even if they don't talk at all . . . for example, to Mr. Fritz. . . . Say, Mr. Fritz, now we'll drink to our better acquaintance, if you wish—and Christine must do the same with Theodore.

Theodore. But not with this wine, that's not the right kind for it. [*Rises, takes another bottle, same ceremony as before.*] Xeres de la Frontera mille huit cent cinquante——

Toni. [*Sips.*] Ah——

Theodore. Can't you wait till we all drink together? Now then, children . . . Before we solemnly drink to our better acquaintance, let us drink to the happy chance that, that . . . and so forth . . .

Toni. Yes, that's enough. [*They drink,* FRITZ *taking* TONI'S *arm,* THEODORE CHRISTINE'S.]

Fritz. [*Kisses* TONI.]

Theodore. [*Starts to kiss* CHRISTINE.]

Christine. Is that necessary?

Theodore. Absolutely, else the whole ceremony is null. . . . [*Kisses her.*] There, and now to your seats! . . .

Toni. But it's getting terribly hot in the room.

Fritz. That's because of all the candles Theodore lit.

Toni. And the wine, too. [*She leans back in her chair.*]

Theodore. Come here, the best of all is coming now. [*He cuts off a slice of the cake and puts it in her mouth.*] There, sweet tooth,—that good?

Toni. Awfully! . . . [*He gives her another.*]

Theodore. Come, Fritz, now's the time. Now you might play something.

Fritz. Do you want me to, Christine?

Christine. Please do!

Toni. Play something swell.

Theodore. [*Fills the glasses.*]

Toni. No more. [*Drinks.*]

Christine. [*Sipping.*] The wine is so heavy.

Theodore. [*Pointing to the glass.*] Fritz.

Fritz. [*Empties the glass, goes to piano.*]

Christine. [*Goes and sits by him.*]

Toni. Mr. Fritz, play the "Double Eagle."

Fritz. The "Double Eagle"—how does it go?

Toni. Dore, can't you play it?

Theodore. I can't play at all.

Fritz. I know the thing; but I can't think of it.

Toni. I'll sing it for you. . . . La . . . la . . . lalalala. . . .

Fritz. Aha, now I know. [*Does not play quite correctly.*]

Toni. [*Goes to the piano.*] No, this way. [*Plays the melody with one finger.*]

Fritz. Yes, yes. . . . [*He plays,* TONI *sings.*]

Theodore. Recollections again, hey?

Fritz. [*Plays wrong again and stops.*] Can't do it. I've got no ear. [*He starts to improvise.*]

Toni. [*After the first measure.*] That's no good.

Fritz. [*Laughs.*] Don't say that, I made it up.

Toni. But it's no good for dancing.

Fritz. Just try it once. . . .

Theodore. [*To* TONI.] Come, let's try. [*They dance.*]

Christine. [*Sits by the piano and looks at the keys.*]

[*There is a ring.*]

Fritz. [*Suddenly stops playing;* THEODORE *and* TONI *dance on.*]

Theodore and Toni. [*Together.*] What's all this? Come!

Fritz. The bell just rang. . . . [*To* THEODORE.] Did you invite anybody else?

Theodore. I should say not—you don't need to answer the bell.

Christine. [*To* FRITZ.] What's the matter with you?

Fritz. Nothing. . . .

[*There is 'another ring.*]

Fritz. [*Stands up, rooted to the spot.*]

Theodore. You are simply not at home.

Fritz. You can hear the piano out in the corridor. . . . And you can see from the street that the room is lit.

Theodore. What folly is this? You're simply not at home.

Fritz. But it makes me nervous.

Theodore. Well, what do you suppose it's going to be? A letter—or a telegram—— You're not going to have a visitor at [*Looks at his watch.*] nine o'clock.

[*There is another ring.*]

Fritz. Rubbish, I must go and see—— [*Exit.*]

Toni. But you're not a bit swell—— [*Strikes a few keys on the piano.*]

Theodore. Here, stop that now!—[*To* CHRISTINE.] What ails you? Does the bell make you nervous too?

Fritz. [*Returns, in forced calm.*]

Theodore and Christine. [*Together.*] Well, who was it?—Who was it?

Fritz. [*With a forced smile.*] You must be good enough to excuse me for a moment. Go in there meanwhile.

Theodore. What is it?

Christine. Who is it?

Fritz. Nothing, child, I simply have to say a few words to a gentleman. . . .

[FRITZ *has opened the door of the adjoining room, conducts the girls into it.* THEODORE, *going in last, looks questioningly at* FRITZ.]

Fritz. [*In a low voice, with an expression of horror.*] He!

Theodore. Ah!

Fritz. In with you!

Theodore. I beg of you, don't do anything stupid, it may be a trap. . . .

Fritz. Go . . . go. . . . [THEODORE *exit.* FRITZ *goes rapidly through the room to the corridor, so that the stage is empty for a few seconds. Then he enters again, allowing an elegantly dressed gentleman of about thirty-five years to precede him.* THE GENTLEMAN *wears a yellow mantle, holds his hat in his gloved hand. While entering.*] Pardon me for making you wait. . . . I beg you. . . .

The Gentleman. [*In a very easy tone.*] Oh, that is nothing. I regret extremely to have disturbed you.

Fritz. By no means. Will you not. . . . [*Indicates a chair.*]

The Gentleman. Why, I see that I have disturbed you? A little entertainment, I presume?

Fritz. A few friends.

The Gentleman. [*Seating himself, amicable.*] A masquerade, no doubt?

Fritz. [*Embarrassed.*] Why do you say that?

The Gentleman. Well, your friends have ladies' hats and cloaks.

Fritz. Well yes. . . . [*Smiling.*] There may be lady friends among them. . . . [*Silence.*]

The Gentleman. Life is at times very merry . . . yes . . . [*Looks rigidly at* FRITZ.]

Fritz. [*Endures the glance a while, then looks away.*] I presume I may permit myself to inquire what gives me the pleasure of your visit?

The Gentleman. Certainly. . . . [*Calmly.*] You see, my wife forgot to take her veil away from here.

Fritz. Your wife . . . here? Her . . . [*Smiling.*] The jest is a trifle strange. . . .

The Gentleman. [*Suddenly rising, very loudly, almost wildly, supporting himself by resting one hand on the chair arm.*] She did forget it.

Fritz. [*Rises also, and the two men stand facing each other.*]

The Gentleman. [*Raises his clenched fist, as if to launch it at* FRITZ; *in fury and loathing.*] Oh! . . .

Fritz. [*Makes a parrying motion, takes a short step backward.*]

The Gentleman. [*After a long pause.*] Here are your letters. [*He throws on the desk a packet of letters which he has taken from his overcoat pocket.*] I wish those which you have received.

Fritz. [*Parrying motion.*]

The Gentleman. [*Vehemently, significantly.*] I do not wish to have them found—later—in your rooms.

Fritz. [*Very loudly.*] They will not be found.

The Gentleman. [*Looks at him. Pause.*]

Fritz. What else do you wish of me?

The Gentleman. [*Scornfully.*] What else?

Fritz. I am at your disposal. . . .

The Gentleman. [*Bows coolly.*] Very well. [*He casts a glance around the room; as he again sees the table and the girls' hats, a sudden flash crosses his face, as if he would burst into a new fit of rage.*]

Fritz. [*Notices this.*] I am wholly at your disposal.—I shall be at home to-morrow till noon.

The Gentleman. [*Bows and turns to go.*]

Fritz. [*Accompanies him to the door,* THE GENTLEMAN *motioning him away. When he is gone,* FRITZ *goes to the desk and stands there a moment. Then he hastens to the window, looks through a crack in the blind, and can be seen to follow the motions of the gentleman passing along the street. Leaving the window he looks down for a moment; then goes to the door of the adjoining room, opens it halfway, and calls.*] Theodore, one moment.

[*The following scene very rapid.*]

Theodore. [*Excited.*] Well? . . .

Fritz. He knows.

Theodore. He knows nothing. You simply fell into his trap. I'll wager you even confessed. You're a fool, I tell you. . . . You . . .

Fritz. [*Pointing to the letters.*] He brought me back my letters.

Theodore. [*Startled.*] Oh! . . . [*After a pause.*] I always say, a man ought not to write letters.

Fritz. It was he, this noon, down below.

Theodore. Well, what happened?—Tell me about it.

Fritz. You must do me a great service now, Theodore.

Theodore. I'll fix up the whole business for you.

Fritz. That is out of the question now.

Theodore. Then . . .

Fritz. In any case it will be well. . . . [*Breaks off.*]—But we can't let the poor girls wait so long.

Theodore. Let them wait. What were you going to say?

Fritz. It will be well if you go to Lensky to-day.

Theodore. At once, if you wish.

Fritz. You won't find him now . . . but between eleven and twelve he will surely come into the coffee-house . . . perhaps the two of you will then come here. . . .

Theodore. Come, don't make up such a face . . . ninety-nine times out of a hundred it turns out all right. . . .

Fritz. He will see to it that this one doesn't turn out all right.

Theodore. But I beg you, remember that affair of last year, between Doctor Billinger and Herz—that was exactly the same.

Fritz. None of that! You know yourself he ought to have shot me down right here in the room—it would have come to the same thing.

Theodore. [*Acting.*] Well, that is fine, I must say. That's a grand idea. . . . And so Lensky and I count for nothing? You think we'll agree that . . .

Fritz. I beg of you, no more of that! . . . You simply accept what is proposed.

Theodore. Ah,——

Fritz. What's the sense of all this, Theodore? As if you didn't know.

Theodore. Nonsense. And anyway, it's all a matter of luck. . . . You have just as much chance of . . .

Fritz. [*Without listening to him.*] She foreboded it. We both foreboded it. We knew it. . . .

Theodore. Come, Fritz. . . .

Fritz. [*Goes to the desk, locks up the letters.*] Oh, what is she doing this minute? Did he . . . Theodore, you must find out to-morrow what happened over there.

Theodore. I will try.

Fritz. And see to it that no useless delay . . .

Theodore. It can scarcely be before day after to-morrow in the morning.

Fritz. [*Almost horrified.*] Theodore!

Theodore. And so . . . head up.—You believe a little in inward conviction, don't you—and I have a firm conviction that everything will turn out all right. [*With forced merriment.*] I don't know why myself, but I have the conviction, anyway!

Fritz. [*Smiling.*] What a good fellow you are. But what shall we say to the girls?

Theodore. That doesn't matter. Let's simply send them away.

Fritz. No, no. Let's be as merry as we can. Christine must not suspect anything. I'll sit down at the piano again; and you call them in. [Theodore *turns to do this, with discontented face.*] And what shall you say to them?

Theodore. That it's none of their business.

Fritz. [*Who has sat down at the piano, turning toward him.*] No, no ——

Theodore. That it's about a friend—I'll invent something.

Fritz. [*Plays a few notes.*]

Theodore. Ladies, I beg you to enter. [*Has opened the door.*]

Toni. Well, at last! Has he gone?

Christine. [*Hastening to* Fritz.] Who was here, Fritz?

Fritz. [*At the piano, playing.*] Curious again.

Christine. I beg you, Fritz, tell me.

Fritz. Sweetheart, I can't tell you; it really concerns people that you don't know at all.

Christine. [*Coaxingly.*] Come, Fritz, tell me the truth.

Theodore. Of course she won't leave you in peace. . . . But mind you tell her nothing! You promised him.

Toni. Come, don't be so tiresome, Christine, let them have their fun. They're simply putting on airs.

Theodore. I must finish that waltz with Miss Toni. [*German accent.*] Bleaze, Mister Music-maker—a liddle museek.

Fritz. [*Plays.*]

[THEODORE *and* TONI *dance a few measures.*]

Toni. [*After a few moments.*] I can't. [*She falls back into a chair.*]

Theodore. [*Kisses her, seats himself beside her on the chair-arm.*]

Fritz. [*Stays at the piano, takes both* CHRISTINE'S *hands, looks at her.*]

Christine. [*As if awakening.*] Why don't you play on?

Fritz. [*Smiling.*] Enough for to-day. . . .

Christine. That's the way I'd like to be able to play.

Fritz. Do you play much?

Christine. I don't get much chance; there's always something in the house that needs to be done. And then you know we have such a poor piano.

Fritz. I'd like to try it once. I'd like to see your room once, anyway.

Christine. [*Smiling.*] It isn't as pretty as here.

Fritz. And something else I'd like: to have you tell me about yourself . . . a whole lot . . . I really know so little about you.

Christine. There isn't much to tell.—And I haven't any secrets either . . . like some others.

Fritz. You never loved any man before?

Christine. [*Merely looks at him.*]

Fritz. [*Kisses her hands.*]

Christine. And never shall love any other.

Fritz. [*With an almost pained expression.*] Don't say that . . . don't . . . What do you know about it? . . . Does your father love you very much, Christine?

Christine. Oh, how much! . . . And there was a time when I used to tell him everything.

Fritz. Well, child, don't reproach yourself. People have to have secrets once in a while—that's the way of the world.

Christine. If I only knew that you loved me—it would all be right.

Fritz. Then don't you know?

Christine. If you would always talk to me like that then . . .

Fritz. Christine! You haven't a very comfortable seat, though.

Christine. Let me be—this is all right. [*She lays her head against the piano.*]

Fritz. [*Stands up and strokes her hair.*]

Christine. Oh, that feels good. [*The room is quiet.*]

Theodore. Where are the cigars, Fritz?

Fritz. [*Advances to him as he stands by the sideboard looking.*]

Toni. [*Has fallen asleep.*]

Fritz. [*Hands him a small box of cigars.*] And black coffee. [*He pours two cups.*]

Theodore. Children, don't you want some coffee, too?

Fritz. Toni, shall I pour a cup? . . .

Theodore. Let them sleep.—You ought not to drink coffee to-day. You ought to go to bed as soon as possible and try to sleep well.

Fritz. [*Looks at him and laughs bitterly.*]

Theodore. Well, things are as they are . . . and now it's not a question of being magnificent or deep, but of being as sensible as you can . . . that's the point . . . in such cases.

Fritz. You'll bring Lensky to me to-night, will you?

Theodore. That's nonsense. To-morrow is time enough.

Fritz. I beg you, bring him.

Theodore. All right, then.

Fritz. Will you take the girls home?

Theodore. Yes, and right away, too.—Toni! . . . Get up!

Toni. Oh, you're drinking black coffee. Give me some, too.

Theodore. Here you are, child.

Fritz. [*To* CHRISTINE, *going to her.*] Tired, my sweetheart?

Christine. How sweet, when you talk that way.

Fritz. Very tired?

Christine. [*Smiling.*] It's the wine.—And I have a little headache, too.

Fritz. Well, that will pass off in the open air.

Christine. Are we going now? Will you go with us?

Fritz. No, child. I'm going to stay right here. I have some things to do.

Christine. [*Recollecting.*] Now . . . What have you got to do now?

Fritz. [*Almost sternly.*] Christine, that's

something you must stop.—[*Gently.*] You see, I'm all used up . . . we walked around in the country for two hours to-day, Theodore and I.

Theodore. Oh, that was delightful. One of these days we'll all drive out into the country together.

Toni. Yes, that will be swell. And you'll put on your uniform.

Theodore. There's feeling for nature!

Christine. When shall I see you again?

Fritz. [*Somewhat nervously.*] I'll write you.

Christine. [*Sadly.*] Good-bye. [*Turns to go.*]

Fritz. [*Notices her sadness.*] To-morrow, Christine.

Christine. [*Happily.*] Truly?

Fritz. In the public gardens out there—at—say at six o'clock. . . . Will that suit you?

Christine. [*Nods.*]

Toni. [*To* FRITZ.] Are you going with us, Fritz?

Fritz. No, I shall stay here.

Toni. He has an easy time of it. Think of the long journey home we have.

Fritz. But Toni, you have left almost the whole of that cake. Wait, I'll wrap it up for you, shall I?

Toni. [*To* THEODORE.] Is that proper?

Fritz. [*Wraps up the cake.*]

Christine. She's like a little child.

Toni. [*To* FRITZ.] Wait, I'll help you put out the candles. [*Puts out one after another.*] The candle on the desk is left burning.

Christine. Shan't I open the window for you? The air is so heavy. [*She opens the window, looks at the house opposite.*]

Fritz. There, children. Now I'll light you down the stairs.

Toni. Are the lights out on the stairs?

Theodore. Why, of course.

Christine. Oh, the air is nice, coming in here.

Toni. May breezes. . . . [*At the door to* FRITZ, *who holds the candlestick.*] Well, we thank you for a warm welcome.

Theodore. [*Urging her forward.*] Come, come, come, come. . . .

Fritz. [*Goes out with them. The door stays open. The voices are heard outside. The outer door is heard to open.*]

Toni. Bah!

Theodore. Look out for the steps there.

Toni. Thanks for the cake.

Theodore. Shh, you'll wake people up.

Christine. Good night.

Theodore. Good night.

[FRITZ *can be heard to close and bolt the outer door. As he enters and puts the light on the desk, the street-door is heard to open and close.*]

Fritz. [*Goes to the window and bows, looking down.*]

Christine. Good night.

Toni. [*In high spirits.*] Good night, my darling child.

Theodore. [*Reprovingly.*] Toni! [*One can hear his words, her laughter; the steps die away.* THEODORE *whistles the melody of the "Double Eagle," which is the last thing heard.* FRITZ *looks out a few moments longer, then sinks down on the chair nearest the window.*]

ACT TWO

CHRISTINE'S *room. Modest and neat.*

Christine. [*Is dressing to go out.*]

Catherine. [*Enters after knocking.*] Good evening, Miss Christine.

Christine. [*Standing before the mirror, turns around.*] Good evening.

Catherine. You're just going out?

Christine. I'm not in such a great hurry.

Catherine. My husband sent me to ask if you wouldn't go and take supper with us in the Zoological Garden; there's a band there to-night.

Christine. Thank you very much, Mrs. Binder. I can't to-night. Another time, perhaps?—But you're not angry?

Catherine. Not a bit, why should I be? You'll probably have a better time than with us.

Christine. [*Looks at her.*]

Catherine. Has your father gone to the theatre?

Christine. Oh, no; he comes home first. It doesn't begin till half past seven now.

Catherine. That's so, I keep forgetting. I'll just wait for him. I've wanted for a long time to ask him about free tickets to the new piece. I suppose they can be had now?

Christine. Surely, nobody goes there any more now, when the evenings are so lovely.

Catherine. People like us never get a chance to go, unless we happen to know somebody in a theatre.—But don't let me keep you, Miss Christine, if you have to go. To be sure, my husband will be very sorry . . . and somebody else too.

Christine. Who?

Catherine. Binder's cousin goes with us, of course. Do you know, Miss Christine, that he has a steady job now?

Christine. [*Indifferently.*] Oh.

Catherine. And a very nice salary. And such a fine young fellow. And he has such respect for you——

Christine. Well—good-bye, Mrs. Binder.

Catherine. A body could tell him anything about you—he wouldn't believe a word of it. . . .

Christine. [*Looks at her.*]

Catherine. There are such men.

Christine. Good-bye, Mrs. Binder.

Catherine. Good-bye. . . . [*Not too maliciously.*] See that you aren't late to your appointment, Miss Christine.

Christine. What do you want of me, anyway?

Catherine. Why, nothing; you're quite right. You can't be young but once.

Christine. Good-bye.

Catherine. But I'd like to give you one piece of advice, just the same, Miss Christine: you ought to be a little more careful.

Christine. Why, what do you mean?

Catherine. Look,—Vienna is such a big city. . . . Do you have to have your meetings a hundred paces from your house?

Christine. I suppose that's nobody's business.

Catherine. I didn't want to believe it, when Binder told me. He saw you, you know. . . . Come, I said to him, you were mistaken, you saw somebody else. Miss Christine is not the girl to go walking with elegant young gentlemen in the evening, and if she did, she would be wise enough not to go walking through these streets. Well, says he, you can ask her yourself. And, says he, it's no wonder, either—she doesn't come to see us any more at all. Instead of that she's going around all the time with Toni Schlager, and what sort of company is that for a decent young girl?—You see, men are so low-minded, Miss Christine. —And of course he had to go and tell everything to Franz right away too; but he got fine and angry, he did, and for Miss Christine he'd burn his hand off, and anybody that said anything about her would have to deal with him. And you're so domestic and were always so sweet with your old auntie—God grant her eternal rest—and you live so modestly and so retiringly and all that. . . . [*Pause.*] Perhaps you'll come to hear the music, after all?

Christine. No. . . .

Vyring. [*Enters, a laurel branch in his hand.*] Good evening.—Ah, Mrs. Binder. How are you?

Catherine. Thank you, well.

Vyring. And little Lena? And your husband?

Catherine. All well, God be praised.

Vyring. Well, that's fine. [*To* Christine.] You're still at home in all this fine weather?

Christine. I was just going out.

Vyring. That's right. The air outside,—it's something wonderful, eh, Mrs. Binder? I just came through the public gardens; the lilacs are in bloom, simply gorgeous. I broke the law a little, too. [*Gives the branch to* Christine.]

Christine. Thank you, father.

Catherine. Thank your lucky stars that the guard didn't catch you.

Vyring. Just go out there once, Mrs. Binder. It smells just as good as if I hadn't plucked the little twig.

Catherine. But if everybody thought the same—

Vyring. Well, that would be a mistake, to be sure.

Christine. Good-bye, father.

Vyring. If you could wait a few minutes, you might go to the theatre with me.

Christine. I . . . I promised Toni that I would go for her. . . .

Vyring. Oh, yes. Well, that's wiser, too. Youth belongs with youth. Good-bye, Christine.

Christine. [*Kisses him.*] Good-bye, Mrs. Binder. [*Exit.* Vyring's *eyes follow her tenderly.*]

Catherine. That's a very close friendship with her and Miss Toni.

Vyring. Yes—I'm really glad that she has such company and doesn't have to sit at home all the time. What sort of a life does that girl have, anyway?

Catherine. Yes, to be sure.

Vyring. I can't tell you, Mrs. Binder, how it hurts me sometimes when I come home from rehearsal and find her sitting there and sewing; and then we've scarcely got up from the table at noon when she sits down again and goes to copying notes.

Catherine. Yes, yes, the millionaires have an easier time of it, to be sure, than we do. But how about her singing?

Vyring. It's not much. Her voice is big enough for a room, and her singing is good enough for her father—but you can't live on that.

Catherine. That's too bad.

Vyring. I am glad she sees it herself. She at least will be spared from disappointments. Of course I could get her into the chorus in our theatre.

Catherine. Of course, with such a figure!

Vyring. But there's no future there.

Catherine. A girl brings really a good many cares. When I think that in five or six years my little Lena will be a grown girl too——

Vyring. But why don't you sit down, Mrs. Binder?

Catherine. Oh, thanks; my husband is coming for me right away—I only came to invite Christine.

Vyring. Invite? . . .

Catherine. Yes, to hear the band in the Zoological Gardens. I thought that might cheer her up a bit. She really needs it.

Vyring. Couldn't do her a bit of harm, especially after this sad winter. Why doesn't she go with you?

Catherine. I don't know. . . . Perhaps because Binder's cousin is with us.

Vyring. Ah, that's possible. You know she can't stand him. She told me that herself.

Catherine. Well, why not? Franz is a very decent fellow—and now he's even got a steady job, and that's a piece of good fortune nowadays for a . . .

Vyring. For a . . . poor girl——

Catherine. For any girl.

Vyring. Now, tell me, Mrs. Binder, is a blooming young creature like that really made for nothing but for some such decent fellow who happens to have a steady job?

Catherine. Why, that's the best thing, after all. You can't wait for a count, and when one happens to come along, he usually takes his leave before he's married you. [Vyring *is at the window. Pause.*] Well, and that's why I always say you can't be careful enough of a young girl, especially of the company she keeps——

Vyring. Well, I wonder if it's worth while to throw away all your young years like that.—And what good does all her goodness do a poor creature like that, even if, after years of waiting, the stocking-maker actually comes?

Catherine. Mr. Vyring, if my husband is a stocking-maker, he is an honest and good man, that I've never had to complain of. . . .

Vyring. [*Soothingly.*] Why, Mrs. Binder, do you think I'm aiming at you? . . . You didn't fling your youth out of the window, either.

Catherine. I have forgotten all about that.

Vyring. Don't say that.—You can say what you like, memories are, after all, the best thing in your life.

Catherine. I haven't any memories.

Vyring. Now, now. . . .

Catherine. And if a body does have such memories as you mean, what remains behind? . . . Regret.

Vyring. Well, and what remains behind—if she—doesn't even have anything to remember? If her whole life simply goes by [*Simply and without emotion.*], day after day, without happiness or love—I suppose you think that's better?

Catherine. But, Mr. Vyring, just think of the old lady, of your sister. . . . But it still pains you to have her spoken of, Mr. Vyring.

Vyring. It still pains me, yes.

Catherine. Of course . . . when two people have clung to each other so warmly. . . . I always said that brothers like you aren't found every day.

Vyring. [*Makes a gesture of deprecation.*]

Catherine. Well, it's true. You had to be both father and mother to her, and such a young man.

Vyring. Yes, yes——

Catherine. And that must be a kind of consolation, too. Then you know that you have been the benefactor and the protector of a poor girl like that——

Vyring. Yes, I imagined that, too—when she was still a pretty young girl—and God knows how clever and noble I thought my-

self. But then, later on, when the gray hairs came and the wrinkles, and one day passed like all the others—and her whole youth—and the girl gradually (you scarcely notice such things) turned into the old maid —then for the first time I began to see what I had done.

Catherine. But Mr. Vyring——

Vyring. I still see her before me, as she often used to sit opposite me in the evening, sitting by the lamp here in the room, and used to look at me with her quiet smile, with a certain resigned expression,—as if she wanted to thank me for something;—and I—I could have gladly gone down on my knees to her, and begged her forgiveness that I had guarded her so well against all dangers—and all happiness! [*Pause.*]

Catherine. And many a girl would be happy just the same, if she always had such a brother by her side . . . and nothing to regret. . . .

Toni. [*Enters.*] Good evening. . . . Why, it's all dark here, you can scarcely see a thing.—Ah, Mrs. Binder. Your husband is down-stairs waiting for you, Mrs. Binder. . . . Isn't Christine at home?

Vyring. She went out a quarter of an hour ago.

Catherine. Didn't you meet her? She was going to meet you.

Toni. No . . . we evidently missed each other.—You're going to hear the band to-night, your husband says.

Catherine. Yes, he is so fond of it. What a charming little hat you have on, Miss Toni. Isn't it a new one?

Toni. I should say not.—Don't you know this style any more? Last spring's style, only freshly trimmed.

Catherine. Did you trim it yourself?

Toni. Well, of course.

Vyring. So clever!

Catherine. Oh, yes—I keep forgetting that you worked for a year in a milliner shop.

Toni. I shall probably go back again. Mother wants me to, and that settles it.

Catherine. How is your mother?

Toni. Well enough—she has a little toothache—but the doctor says it's rheumatic pains.

Vyring. Well, it's time for me . . .

Catherine. I'll go right down with you, Mr. Vyring.

Toni. I'll go, too. But take your overcoat, Mr. Vyring; it's going to be quite cool later on.

Vyring. You think so?

Catherine. Yes, indeed.—How can you be so foolish?

Christine. [*Enters.*]

Toni. Why, there she is.

Catherine. Back from your walk already?

Christine. Yes, Hello, Toni,—I have a headache. [*Seats herself.*]

Vyring. Headache?

Catherine. That's from the air.

Vyring. Come, what's the matter, Christine?—Please, Miss Toni, will you light the lamp?

Toni. [*Sets about it.*]

Christine. But I can do that myself.

Vyring. Let me see your face, Christine.

Christine. But, father, it is nothing; it's just the air outside.

Catherine. Lots of people can't stand the spring air.

Vyring. Miss Toni, you'll stay with Christine, won't you?

Toni. Of course I will.

Christine. But it isn't anything, father.

Toni. My mother doesn't make such a fuss over me, when I have a headache.

Vyring. [*To* Christine, *still sitting.*] Are you so tired?

Christine. [*Standing up.*] I'll get right up again. [*Smiling.*]

Vyring. There—now you look quite different again. [*To* Catherine.] She looks quite different when she smiles, don't you think? Well, good-bye Christine. [*Kisses her.*] And see to it that your little head isn't aching when I come home. [*He is at the door.*]

Catherine. [*Softly to* Christine.] Have you quarreled?

Christine. [*Makes an angry gesture.*]

Vyring. [*At the door.*] Mrs. Binder!

Toni. Good-bye.

[*Exeunt* Vyring *and* Catherine.]

Toni. Do you know what your headache comes from? From the sweet wine yesterday. I'm surprised that I don't feel the effects of it. But it was jolly, wasn't it?

Christine. [*Nods.*]

Toni. They're swell people, aren't they?—both of them, you can't say anything different, can you?—And such nice rooms as Fritz has, really splendid. At Dore's place . . . [*Interrupts herself.*] Oh, well.—Say

have you still got such a headache? Why don't you talk? . . . What's the matter with you?

Christine. Only think,—he didn't come.

Toni. Left you in the lurch, did he? Serves you right.

Christine. Why, what do you mean? What have I done?

Toni. You spoil him, that's all; you're too nice to him. A man just can't help getting tyrannical.

Christine. You don't know what you're talking about.

Toni. I do know quite well.—I've been angry with you this long time. He comes late to his appointments; he doesn't take you home; he goes into a theatre-box with strangers; he leaves you in the lurch—and you take it all calmly and make sheep's eyes [*imitating*] at him into the bargain.

Christine. Oh, don't talk so, don't make yourself out worse than you are. You love Theodore too.

Toni. Love him—of course I love him. But he won't find me grieving about him, and no man will, not any more. There isn't one of these men that is worth it.

Christine. I never heard you talk so, never!

Toni. No. Tina—we never talked like this before. I never dared, you see. You don't know how afraid of you I was! . . . But I always thought this: when you once get it, you'll get it bad. And the first time it certainly does give you a shaking up.—But you can be thankful that you've got such a good friend to help you through your first love affair.

Christine. Toni!

Toni. Don't you believe me when I say I'm a good friend to you? If I wasn't here to tell you that he's just a man like the rest, and that the whole manpack isn't worth a single bad hour, God knows what thoughts might come into your head. But I always will say, you never can believe a word men say.

Christine. What do you mean by saying men, men—what do I care about men!—I'm not asking about the others.—As long as I live I shall never think about another man.

Toni. Well, what are you thinking of? . . . has he? . . . Of course—such things have happened; but then you ought to have gone at the affair differently.

Christine. Do keep still!

Toni. Well, what do you want? I can't help it if it's so.—You have to think about a thing like that. You simply have to wait till somebody comes that you can see is in earnest from his face. . . .

Christine. Toni, I can't stand such words to-day; they hurt me.

Toni. [*Good-humoredly.*] Oh, now, come ——

Christine. Leave me alone . . . don't be angry . . . leave me alone!

Toni. Why should I be angry? I'll go. I didn't want to hurt you, Christine, truly not. [*Turns to go.*] Ah, Mr. Fritz.

Fritz. [*Has entered.*] Good evening.

Christine. [*With a joyous cry.*] Fritz! Fritz! [*Rushes into his arms.*]

Toni. [*Steals out, her face saying: I'm not needed here.*]

Fritz. [*Freeing himself.*] But ——

Christine. They all say you will forsake me! But you won't, will you—not yet—not just yet?

Fritz. Who says it? What ails you? [*Patting her.*] But, sweetheart, . . . I really thought you would be startled when I suddenly came walking in here.

Christine. Oh—so long as I have you!

Fritz. Come, calm yourself—did you wait long for me?

Christine. Why didn't you come?

Fritz. I was detained and that made me late. Just now I was in the gardens and didn't find you—and was going home again. Suddenly I had such a longing, such a longing for your dear little face . . .

Christine. [*Happily.*] Oh, truly?

Fritz. And then, too, I had such an indescribable desire to see where you live—yes, really—I just had to see it once. And so I couldn't stand it and came up here . . . and so you really don't mind?

Christine. Oh, the idea!

Fritz. Nobody saw me; and I knew your father was in the theatre.

Christine. What do I care about people!

Fritz. So this is—[*Looks around the room.*]—this is your room? Very pretty.

Christine. You can't see anything. [*Is about to take the shade off the lamp.*]

Fritz. No, don't do that, the light blinds me, it's better this way. So that's the win-

dow you've told me about, where you always sit and work, eh?—And the pretty view! [*Smiling.*] But just look at all the roofs you see.—And over there—what's that black thing I see over yonder?

Christine. That's Bald Mountain.

Fritz. Sure enough. You really have a better view than I.

Christine. Oh!

Fritz. I'd like to live up so high, and be able to overlook all the roofs; I think that is very nice. And I suppose the alley is quiet?

Christine. Oh, in the daytime there's noise enough.

Fritz. Do any teams go past?

Christine. Not often, but there's a locksmith in the house opposite.

Fritz. Oh, that's very unpleasant. [*He has sat down.*]

Christine. You get used to it; you don't hear it any more.

Fritz. [*Rises again hastily.*] Is this really my first visit? Everything seems so familiar to me. . . . I have imagined everything just this way. [*He starts to look around the room.*]

Christine. No, you mustn't look at anything.

Fritz. What are those pictures?

Christine. Oh, stop!

Fritz. Ah, I want to look at them. [*He takes the lamp and lights the pictures.*]

Christine. "Parting and Return."

Fritz. Sure enough—"Parting and Return."

Christine. I know well enough that the pictures aren't pretty.—There is a much better one in father's room.

Fritz. What picture is it?

Christine. It is a girl looking out of the window, and outside it's winter, you know—and it's name is "Forsaken."

Fritz. Oh.—[*Puts down the lamp.*] Ah, and that's your library. [*Sits down beside the little book-rack.*]

Christine. You'd better not look at them.

Fritz. Why not? Ah! Schiller . . . Hauff . . . Pocket Encyclopedia . . . Goodness gracious!

Christine. It only goes to G.

Fritz. [*Smiling.*] Oh. . . . A book for old and young. . . . You look at the pictures in it, I suppose?

Christine. Of course I've looked at the pictures.

Fritz. [*Still seated.*] Who is the gentleman there on the stove?

Christine. Why, don't you know? That's Schubert.

Fritz. [*Rising.*] Sure enough.

Christine. Because father likes him so much. Father used to compose songs himself, very beautiful ones.

Fritz. And now he doesn't?

Christine. Not any more. [*Pause.*]

Fritz. [*Sits down.*] How cosy it is here.

Christine. Do you really like it?

Fritz. Very much. . . . What is that? [*Takes up a vase of artificial flowers standing on the table.*]

Christine. He's found something else!

Fritz. No, child, that doesn't belong in here. . . . It looks so dusty.

Christine. But they certainly aren't dusty.

Fritz. Artificial flowers always look dusty. . . . Real flowers ought to be in your room, flowers that are fresh and sweet-smelling. From now I shall . . . [*Breaks off, turns to conceal his emotion.*]

Christine. What? What were you going to say?

Fritz. Nothing, nothing.

Christine. [*Rises. Tenderly.*] What was it?

Fritz. I was going to say that I would send you fresh flowers to-morrow.

Christine. Well, and did you want to take it back so soon?—Of course! To-morrow you won't be thinking of me any more.

Fritz. [*Deprecatory gesture.*]

Christine. Certainly, it's out of sight, out of mind, with you.

Fritz. What are you saying?

Christine. Oh, yes, I know. I can tell.

Fritz. How can you imagine such a thing?

Christine. You are to blame yourself. Because you're always keeping secrets from me. . . . Because you never tell me about yourself.—What do you do all day?

Fritz. Why, sweetheart, that's very simple. I go to lectures—sometimes—then I go into the coffeehouse . . . then I read . . . or sometimes I play the piano—then I chat with somebody—then I go calling . . . but all that is of no account. It's tiresome to talk about it.—But now I must go, child.

Christine. So soon ——

Fritz. Your father will soon be here.

Christine. Not for a long time yet, Fritz. —Stay awhile—just a minute—stay awhile.

Fritz. And then I have . . . Theodore is expecting me. . . . I have something to talk over with him.

Christine. To-day?

Fritz. Surely to-day.

Christine. You can see him to-morrow, too.

Fritz. Perhaps I shan't be in Vienna to-morrow.

Christine. Not in Vienna?

Fritz. [*Noticing her alarm, calmly, cheerfully.*] Well, that wouldn't be anything wonderful, would it? I'm going away for a day—or perhaps for two, you child, you.

Christine. Where to?

Fritz. Where? . . . Oh, anywhere.—Good heavens, don't make up such a face. . . . I'm going out to my father's estate. . . . Well, is that so terrible to you?

Christine. And you never tell me about him, either.

Fritz. No; what a child you are. . . . You don't understand how nice it is to be all alone together. Tell me, don't you feel that?

Christine. No, it isn't nice at all that you never tell me anything about yourself. . . . You see, I'm interested in everything that touches you, . . . yes, everything.—I'd like to have more of you than just the one hour in the evening that we can spend together sometimes. Then you are gone again, and I don't know anything. . . . Then the whole night goes and a whole day, with so many hours in it—and still I don't know anything. And that often makes me so sad.

Fritz. Why does that make you sad?

Christine. Why, because I have such a longing for you as if you weren't in the same city at all, as if you were somewhere else. You simply disappear, as far as I am concerned, so far away. . . .

Fritz. [*Somewhat impatient.*] But——

Christine. Well, it's true!

Fritz. Come here to me. [*She does so.*] After all, the only thing you know is that I—that you love me at this moment. . . . [*She wishes to speak.*] Don't talk about eternity. [*More to himself.*] Perhaps there are moments that scatter around them the aroma of eternity.—That is the only one that we can understand, the only one that belongs to us. [*He kisses her. Pause. He rises. With a sudden outburst.*] Oh, how beautiful it is here, how beautiful! [*He stands at the window.*] So far from the world you are in here, among all the many houses. . . . I seem to be so alone here, just with you. . . . [*Softly.*] So sheltered.

Christine. If you always talked like that . . . I could almost believe . . .

Fritz. Believe what, child?

Christine. That you loved me as I dreamed it—the day you kissed me the first time, . . . do you remember?

Fritz. [*Passionately.*] I do love you!—[*He embraces her; tears himself from her.*] But now let me go.

Christine. Are you sorry you said it, so soon again? You are free, you know you are free—you can go and leave me whenever you like . . . you haven't promised me anything—and I haven't demanded anything of you. . . . It doesn't matter what becomes of me, then: I've been happy for once, and that's all I ask of life. I only want you to know that and to believe that I never—loved any man before you, and that I never shall love any man—when you get tired of me——

Fritz.]*More to himself.*[Don't say it, don't say it—it sounds—so sweet.

[*There is a knock.*]

Fritz. [*Starts.*] That's probably Theodore.

Christine. [*Startled.*] He knows that you are here?

Theodore. [*Enters.*] Good evening.—Impudent of me, eh?

Christine. Do you have such important matters to discuss with him?

Theodore. I certainly have; and have been looking everywhere for him.

Fritz. [*In a low voice.*] Why didn't you wait below?

Christine. What are you whispering to him?

Theodore. [*Wishing her to hear.*] Why I didn't wait below. . . . Well, if I had absolutely known that you were here. . . . But I couldn't risk walking up and down outside for two hours.

Fritz. [*Pointedly.*] Then . . . you will go with me to-morrow?

Theodore. [*Comprehending.*] Surely.

Fritz. That's right.

Theodore. But I've been hurrying so that

I must beg permission to sit down for a few seconds.

Christine. Please do. [*Busies herself at the window.*]

Fritz. [*Softly.*] Anything new?—Did you find out about her?

Theodore. No. I merely came to get you because you are so incautious. What's the use of these unnecessary excitements? You ought to try to sleep. . . . It's rest you need. . . . [CHRISTINE *is near them again.*]

Fritz. Tell me, isn't this a dear little room?

Theodore. Yes, it is very nice. [*To* CHRISTINE.] Do you stay here at home all day long?—Really, it is very homelike here. A little high up for my taste.

Fritz. That's just what I like about it.

Theodore. But now I'm going to take Fritz away from you; we've got to get up early in the morning.

Christine. Then you are really going away?

Theodore. He will come again, Miss Christine.

Christine. Will you write to me?

Theodore. But if he comes back to-morrow ——

Christine. Oh, I know he's going to stay longer than that.

Fritz. [*Starts.*]

Theodore. [*Notices it.*] Well, does he have to write immediately? I wouldn't have thought you so sentimental. . . . Well, . . . kiss each other good-bye, since it'll be so long. . . . [*Breaks off.*] I'm simply not here.

[FRITZ *and* CHRISTINE *kiss.*]

Theodore. [*Takes out a cigarette-case and puts a cigarette in his mouth; seeks vainly for a match.*] Tell me, dear Christine, haven't you a match?

Christine. Oh, yes, there are some. [*Points to a holder on the chest of drawers.*]

Theodore. It's empty.

Christine. I'll get you one. [*Hurries into adjoining room.*]

Fritz. [*Looking after her.*] Oh, God, how such hours lie to us!

Theodore. Why, what hours?

Fritz. I'm almost ready to believe that my happiness is here, that this sweet girl—[*Breaks off.*]—but this hour is a tremendous liar. . . .

Theodore. Absurd talk. . . . How you will laugh at it.

Fritz. I don't think I shall have any time for that.

Christine. [*Returns.*] Here you are.

Theodore. Thanks very much. . . . Good-bye, then.—[*To* FRITZ.] Well, what do you want now?

Fritz. [*Looks back and forth around the room, as if to deepen the impression in his mind.*] It's hard to leave it.

Christine. Oh, make fun of it if you like.

Theodore. [*Firmly.*] Come.—Good-bye, Christine.

Fritz. Farewell.

Christine. Till we meet again. [THEODORE *and* FRITZ *exeunt. She stands a moment, anxious, then goes to the open door, softly.*] Fritz!

Fritz. [*Comes back again and presses her to his heart.*] Farewell.

ACT THREE

The same scene as the second act. It is noon.

Christine. [*Alone, sitting sewing by the window; lays down her work.*]

Lena. [*Enters.*] Good day, Miss Christine.

Christine. [*Very absent-mindedly.*] Good day, child; what is it?

Lena. Mother sent me to see if I could get the theatre tickets.

Christine. Father hasn't got home yet, child; will you wait?

Lena. No, Miss Christine; then I'll come after lunch again.

Christine. Very well.

Lena. [*Going, turns back.*] And mother said to ask Miss Christine if her headache was gone yet.

Christine. Yes, child.

Lena. Good-bye, Miss Christine.

Christine. Good-bye.

Toni. [*Enters just as* LENA *is going out.*]

Lena. Good day, Miss Toni.

Toni. Hello, little monkey!

Lena. [*Exit.*]

Christine. [*Rises to meet* TONI.] Then they are back?

Toni. How should I know?

Christine. And you haven't any letter, nothing?

Toni. No.

Christine. You have no letter, either?

Toni. What should we write to each other?

Christine. They've been gone since day before yesterday.

Toni. Yes, yes, that's not such a long time. You needn't make such a fuss on that account. I don't understand you . . . and how you look,—your face is all tear-stained. Your father will surely notice it when he comes home.

Christine. [*Simply.*] My father knows everything.

Toni. [*Almost frightened.*] What?

Christine. I told him.

Toni. That's another of your bright ideas. But of course your face shows everything. And does he know who it is?

Christine. Yes.

Toni. And did he scold?

Christine. [*Shakes her head.*]

Toni. What did he say, then?

Christine. Nothing. . . . He went away very quietly, as usual.

Toni. And still it was stupid of you to tell. You'll see. . . . Do you know why your father said nothing? Because he thinks Fritz will marry you.

Christine. Why do you speak of that?

Toni. Do you know what I think?

Christine. Well, what?

Toni. That this whole story of a journey is a lie.

Christine. What?

Toni. Perhaps they haven't gone away at all.

Christine. They have gone—I know they have. Yesterday evening I went past his house; the blinds were down; he isn't there.

Toni. Oh, I believe that. They're away all right. But they won't come back—at least not to us.

Christine. [*Anxiously.*] Oh——

Toni. Well, it's possible.

Christine. You say that so calmly.

Toni. Why yes—whether it happens today or tomorrow—or in six months—it comes to the same thing.

Christine. Oh, you don't know what you are saying. . . . You don't know Fritz. . . . He isn't like what you think. I found that out when he was here in my room the other day. Often he only pretends to be indifferent—but he does love me. . . . [*As if she divined* Toni's *reply.*] Yes, yes, not forever, I know that . . . but it can't stop all at once!

Toni. Well, I don't know Fritz so well.

Christine. He will come back, and Theodore will come back too; I am sure of it.

Toni. [*Makes a gesture indicating indifference.*]

Christine. Toni . . . do me a favor.

Toni. Don't be so excited—what is it you want?

Christine. Go to Theodore's, it's right near here. . . . Ask in the house whether he's got back yet, and if he isn't back, perhaps they'll know when he's coming.

Toni. I'm not going to run after a man.

Christine. He doesn't need to find it out. Perhaps you'll happen to meet him. It's almost one o'clock now—he'll be just going to lunch.

Toni. Why don't you go and ask at Fritz's house?

Christine. I'm afraid to—he doesn't like that. . . . And he is certainly not back yet. But perhaps Theodore is back by now and knows when Fritz is coming. Oh, please Toni!

Toni. You're so childish sometimes.

Christine. Do it for me! Go and ask! It won't do any harm.

Toni. Well, if it means so much to you I'll go. But it won't do much good. I'm sure they aren't back yet.

Christine. And you'll come right back, won't you?

Toni. Yes, yes; mother can wait lunch a little.

Christine. I thank you, Toni, you're so good.

Toni. Of course I'm good—but now you be sensible, won't you? . . . Well, so long.

Christine. Oh, thank you!

Toni. [*Exit.*]

Christine. [*Arranges the room, folds up her sewing, etc. Then she goes to window and looks out. After a moment* Vyring *enters without her seeing him at first. He is in great excitement, looks anxiously at his daughter.*]

Vyring. She knows nothing yet, nothing. [*He remains standing in the doorway and does not venture to take a step into the room.*]

Christine. [*Turns, sees him, starts.*]

Vyring. [*Tries to smile. He steps in.*]

Well, Christine. . . . [*As if calling her to him.*]

Christine. [*Goes to him, as if to fall before him.*]

Vyring. [*Prevents her.*] Well . . . what are you thinking of, Christine? We . . . [*With a new resolve.*] We'll just forget it, shall we?

Christine. [*Raises her head.*]

Vyring. Why yes . . . I—and you!

Christine. Father, didn't you understand me this morning?

Vyring. Well, what would you have, Christine? . . . I surely must tell you what I think about it, don't you think so? Well, then . . .

Christine. Father, what does this mean?

Vyring. Come here, my child. . . . Listen to me quietly. You know I listened quietly to you, when you told me. We must——

Christine. Oh, I beg you, don't speak to me so, father. If you have thought it over, and find that you can't forgive me, then drive me away—but don't speak that way.

Vyring. Just listen quietly to me, Christine. You can still do whatever you will. . . . See, Christine, you are so young. Haven't you ever thought . . . [*With great hesitation.*] that the whole thing might be a mistake?

Christine. Why do you say that to me, father? I know so well what I have done—and I don't ask anything—not from you and not from anybody in the world, if it has been a mistake. . . . I just told you, drive me away, but . . .

Vyring. [*Interrupting.*] How can you talk so. . . . Even if it was a mistake, is that any reason for getting desperate right away, such a young creature as you are? Just think how beautiful, how wonderful life is. Just think how many things there are to give you joy, how much youth and how much happiness still lies before you. . . . See, I don't have much of the world any more, and even for me life is still beautiful—and I can still look forward to so many things. How we shall be together—how we shall plan our life, you and I—how you will begin to sing again, now that the beautiful days are here—and how we'll take a whole day off, when summer comes, and go out into the green country—Oh, there are so many lovely things . . . so many. It is silly to give up everything, because one must give up his first happiness, or anything that he thought was that.

Christine. Why . . . [*Anxiously.*] then must I give it up?

Vyring. Well, was it happiness? Do you really think, Christine, that you had to tell your father today? I have known it for a long time—and I knew too that you would tell me. No, it never was happiness for you. . . . Don't I know those eyes? There wouldn't have been tears in them so often, and those cheeks wouldn't have been pale so much, if you had loved a man who was worthy of it.

Christine. Why, how can you . . . what do you know . . . what have you heard?

Vyring. Nothing, nothing at all. . . . But you yourself told me what he is. . . . A young fellow like that—what does he know? Has he the faintest idea of what falls into his hands—does he know the difference between the true and the false—and all your mad love—did he ever understand that?

Christine. [*More and more alarmed.*] You and he. . . . Were you at his house?

Vyring. Why, what are you thinking of! He went away, didn't he? But Christine, I still have a head on my shoulders, and my eyes in my head. Come, child, forget about it, do! Your future lies in an altogether different place. You can, you will still be as happy as you deserve. You will find a man some time who will know what a treasure he has in you.

Christine. [*Has hurried to the chest of drawers to get her hat.*]

Vyring. What are you doing?

Christine. I'm going out.

Vyring. Where to?

Christine. To him . . . to him.

Vyring. What are you thinking of?

Christine. You're keeping something from me—let me go.

Vyring. [*Holding her firmly.*] Come to your senses, child. He isn't there at all. Perhaps he's gone away for a very long time. . . . Stay here; what do you want there? . . . Tomorrow or this evening I'll go there with you. You can't go out on the street like that . . . do you know how you look?

Christine. You will go with me?

Vyring. I promise you I will. Only stay here now; sit down and come to your senses

again. It's enough to make a man laugh, almost, to look at you . . . and all for nothing. Can't you stand it here with your father at all any more?

Christine. What is it you know?

Vyring. [*More and more helpless.*] What should I know? . . . I know that I love you, that you are my only child, that you must stay with me all the time——

Christine. Enough—let me go. [*She wrests herself from him and opens the door;* Toni *appears in it.*]

Toni. [*Utters a little cry, as* Christine *rushes toward her.*] Why do you frighten me so?

Christine. [*Steps back, seeing* Theodore *behind* Toni.]

Theodore. [*Remains in the doorway; he is dressed in black.*]

Christine. What . . . what is . . . [*No answer. She looks* Theodore *in the face; he cannot meet her eyes.*] Where is he, where is he? . . . [*In the greatest terror. No answer; all faces are embarrassed and sad.*] Where is he? [*To* Theodore.] Speak, can't you?

Theodore. [*Tries to speak.*]

Christine. [*Looks at him wide-eyed, looks around her, comprehends the look on their faces, her face shows the dawn of this understanding, she utters a terrible cry.*] Theodore . . . he is . . .

Theodore. [*Nods.*]

Christine. [*Seizes her forehead, cannot understand it; she goes to* Theodore, *takes him by the arm, as if demented.*] He is . . . dead? [*As if asking herself.*]

Vyring. My child——

Christine. [*Thrusting him away.*] Speak, Theodore, speak!

Theodore. You know all.

Christine. I know nothing. . . . I don't know what has happened . . . do you think . . . I can't hear everything now? . . . how did it happen . . . Father . . . Theodore . . . [*To* Toni.] You know it too.

Theodore. An unfortunate accident.

Christine. What, what?

Theodore. He fell.

Christine. What does that mean: he . . .

Theodore. He fell in a duel.

Christine. [*Shrieks. She is about to fall,* Vyring *sustains her, motions to* Theodore *to go. She notes it and seizes him.*] Stay here. . . . I must know all. Do you think you can keep anything from me now?

Theodore. What else do you want to know?

Christine. Why—why did he fight a duel?

Theodore. I don't know the reason.

Christine. With whom, with whom? . . . You surely know who killed him? . . . Well, well, who . . .

Theodore. Nobody you know.

Christine. Who, who?

Toni. Christine!

Christine. Who? You tell me! [*To* Toni.] . . . Father, you tell me . . . [*No answer. She starts to go out.* Vyring *holds her back.*] Can't I know who killed him, and for what cause?

Theodore. It was . . . a trivial cause . . .

Christine. You're not telling the truth . . . why, why . . .

Theodore. Dear Christine. . . .

Christine. [*As if about to interrupt, goes up to him; looks at him in silence, then suddenly shrieks.*] On account of a woman?

Theodore. No——

Christine. Yes—for a woman . . . [*Turning to* Toni.] for that woman—for that woman that he loved. And her husband—yes, yes, her husband killed him . . . And I . . . what am I? What was I to him? . . . Theodore . . . haven't you anything for me at all . . . didn't he write down anything? . . . Didn't he tell you anything for me? Didn't you find anything . . . a letter . . . a note . . .

Theodore. [*Shakes his head.*]

Christine. And that evening . . . when he was here, when you came to get him . . . he knew it, he knew then that he perhaps would never . . . And he went away from here to be killed for another woman. No, no, it is not possible . . . didn't he know what he was to me . . . didn't . . .

Theodore. He did know. On the last morning, when we drove out together . . . he spoke of you too.

Christine. He spoke of me too! Of me too! And of what else? Of how many other people, of how many other things, that meant just as much to him as I did? Of me too! Oh, God! . . . And of his father and his mother and his room and of the springtime and of the city and of everything, everything that belonged to his life and that he had to give up just as much

as he gave up me—of everything he talked to you . . . and of me too . . .

Theodore. [*Moved.*] He surely loved you.

Christine. Love? He? I was nothing to him but a pastime—and he died for another woman! And I— I worshiped him! Didn't he know that? . . . That I gave him everything I could give, that I would have died for him—that he was my God and my bliss of Heaven—didn't he see that at all? He could go away from me with a smile, out of my room, and be shot down for another woman. . . . Father, father, can you understand that?

Vyring. [*Goes to her.*] Christine!

Theodore. [*To* Toni.] Child, you might have spared me this.

Toni. [*Looks at him venomously.*]

Theodore. I have had enough distress . . . these last days . . .

Christine. [*With sudden resolve.*] Theodore, take me to him—I want to see him—once more I want to see him—his face—Theodore, take me to him.

Theodore. [*With a gesture, hesitatingly.*] No. . . .

Christine. Why "no"? You can't refuse me that! Surely I can see him once more?

Theodore. It is too late.

Christine. Too late? To see his corpse . . . is it too late? Yes . . . yes . . . [*She does not understand.*]

Theodore. He was buried this morning.

Christine. [*With the greatest horror.*] Buried . . . And I didn't know about it? They shot him . . . and put him in his coffin and carried him out and buried him down in the earth—and I couldn't even see him once more? He's been dead two days—and you didn't come and tell me?

Theodore. [*Much moved.*] In these two days I have . . . You cannot dream all that I . . . Consider that it was my duty to notify his parents—I had to think of many things—and then my own state of mind.

Christine. Your . . .

Theodore. And then the . . . it was done very quietly. . . . Only the closest relatives and friends . . .

Christine. The closest ——? And I ——? . . . What am I?

Toni. They would have asked that.

Christine. What am I? Less than all the rest ——? Less than his relatives, less than —you?

Vyring. My child, my child. Come to me, to me. . . . [*He embraces her. To* Theodore.] Go . . . leave me alone with her.

Theodore. I am very . . . [*With tears in his voice.*] I never suspected . . .

Christine. Never suspected what? That I loved him? [Vyring *draws her to him;* Theodore *looks down;* Toni *stands near* Christine. *Freeing herself.*] Take me to his grave!

Vyring. No, no ——

Toni. Don't go, Christine.

Theodore. Christine . . . later . . . tomorrow . . . when you are calmer ——

Christine. Tomorrow? When I shall be calmer? And in a month completely consoled, eh? And in six months I can laugh again, can I? [*Laughing shrilly.*] And then when will the next lover come?

Vyring. Christine . . .

Christine. Stay here, then . . . I can find the way alone . . .

Vyring and Toni. [*Together.*] Don't go.

Christine. It's even better . . . if I . . . let me go, let go.

Vyring. Christine, stay here.

Toni. Don't go! Perhaps you'll find the other one there—praying.

Christine. [*To herself, her eyes fixed.*] I won't pray there . . . no . . . [*She rushes out; the others speechless for the moment.*]

Vyring. Hurry after her.

[Theodore *and* Toni *exeunt.*]

Vyring. I can't, I can't . . . [*He goes painfully from the door to the window.*] What does she want . . . what does she want . . . [*He looks through the window.*] She won't come back—she won't come back! [*He sinks to the floor, sobbing loudly.*]

THE END

COMRADES

(KAMRATERNA)

By AUGUST STRINDBERG

Translated from the Swedish by EDITH and WARNER ÖLAND

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AUGUST STRINDBERG AND HIS PLAYS

August Strindberg, the author of *Comrades,* was born in Stockholm in 1849 and for a time attended the University of Upsala, where his studies were interrupted by ill health. Although from the first a dramatist by instinct and desire, he was by turns schoolmaster, journalist, actor, and librarian. His short stories and novels established his reputation as a writer, and the production of his first great play, *The Father,* in 1887, definitely marked him as the chief dramatist of Sweden. He founded his own theatre in Stockholm, where he staged his plays. He was married three times, each marriage ending in divorce. This fact has been offered as an explanation of the singularly bitter attitude toward women that is shown in several of his most celebrated plays; but this attitude is not necessarily the result of his unhappy experiences, since it manifested itself even before his first marriage. As a result of overwork and nervous strain, his mind became affected, and he had to spend a year in a sanitarium, but in 1897 he resumed his work with even greater vigor and success. He died in 1912.

Strindberg has become recognized as one of the most original and powerful forces in modern drama. Although younger than Ibsen and Björnson, who created the modern drama of Norway as he did that of Sweden, he was not influenced by them, and he ranks with them as an innovator. He belongs, simply as a man of the theatre, perhaps more to the present, and even to the future, than either Ibsen or Björnson. Strindberg is one of the most difficult of dramatists to classify, for his plays cover so wide a range of matter, form, and style: historical romances; historical biographical plays, in which he applies the new psychology to old material; naturalistic comedies and tragedies; fairy plays, and plays of mysticism and fantasy. He is known most widely as a naturalist, perhaps, but he is a naturalist who penetrates beneath surfaces, seeking inner realities. In this incessant search he grows impatient of restrictions of form, and progresses farther and farther beyond mere surface realism, altering his technique and style (or, rather, having it altered for him by the inner necessities of his material), until he reaches sheer symbolism, mysticism, and that method which he was the first to discover and practice, and which is now termed "expressionism."

Yet all this immense and varied product possesses an inner unity provided by Strindberg's own personality and by his search for reality and truth. He is the most subjective of dramatists; his plays mirror his own states of mind; and to the last he is merely seeking a suitable form of expression for his inner self. Being impelled to utterance simply by this innate necessity, he has no set theories of technique, no "philosophy of composition." Nor has he, like Ibsen, any set ideas, or any constructive program. He is from first to last primarily a psychologist, who sees human character not as something fixed but as a variable in a state of flux, and not as single but as functioning on various planes of consciousness. This idea is implicit even in his earlier and naturalistic plays, and finally it altogether dictates the technique of his later and "expressionistic" plays, which actually mingle reality with dream. His characters are always forceful, always distinguished by mentality, and never commonplace. His psychology is of the most modern type; he even anticipates the theories of the current psycho-analytic school.

To the general public Strindberg is probably best known by his naturalistic plays, such as *The Father, Comrades, Countess Julie,* and *The Dance of Death,* penetrating studies in sex-relationship that show his cynical attitude toward women. It is not, however, these anti-feministic plays, powerful as they are, but such expressionistic plays as *The Spook Sonata* and the trilogy *Toward Damascus* that place Strindberg as a modern among the moderns and that have strongly influenced the dramaturgic practice of the younger dramatists.

Comrades, though written in 1888, apparently was not produced until 1910, in Stockholm.

CHARACTERS

AXEL, *an artist*
BERTHA, *his wife, artist*
ABEL, *her friend*
WILLMER, *litterateur*
ÖSTERMARK, *a doctor*
MRS. HALL, *his divorced wife*
THE MISSES HALL, *her daughters by a second marriage*
CARL STARCK, *lieutenant*
MRS. STARCK, *his wife*
MAID

The action takes place in Paris at the present day

COMRADES

ACT ONE

An artist's studio in Paris; it is on the ground floor, has glass windows looking out on an orchard. At back of scene a large window and door to hall. On the walls hang studies, canvases, weapons, costumes and plaster casts. To right there is a door leading to AXEL'S *room; to left a door leading to* BERTHA'S *room. There is a model stand left center. To right an easel and painting materials. A large sofa, a large stove through the doors of which one sees a hot coal fire. There is a hanging-lamp from ceiling. At rise of curtain* AXEL *and* DOCTOR ÖSTERMARK *are discovered.*

Axel. [*Sitting, painting.*] And you, too, are in Paris!

Dr. Östermark. Everything gathers here as the center of the world; and so you are married—and happy?

Axel. Oh, yes, so, so. Yes, I'm quite happy. That's understood.

Dr. Östermark. What's understood?

Axel. Look here, you're a widower. How was it with your marriage?

Dr. Östermark. Oh, very nice—for her.

Axel. And for you?

Dr. Östermark. So, so! But you see one must compromise, and we compromised to the end.

Axel. What do you mean by compromise?

Dr. Östermark. I mean—that I gave in!

Axel. You?

Dr. Östermark. Yes, you wouldn't think that of a man like me, would you?

Axel. No, I would never have thought that. Look here, don't you believe in woman, eh?

Dr. Östermark. No, sir! I do not. But I love her.

Axel. In your way—yes!

Dr. Östermark. In my way—yes. How about your way?

Axel. We have arranged a sort of comradeship, you see, and friendship is higher and more enduring than love.

Dr. Östermark. H'm—so Bertha paints too. How? Well?

Axel. Fairly well.

Dr. Östermark. We were good friends in the old days, she and I,—that is, we always quarreled a little.— Some visitors. Hush! It is Carl and his wife!

Axel. [*Rising.*] And Bertha isn't at home! Sacristi! [*Enter* LIEUTENANT CARL STARCK *and his wife.*] Welcome! Well, well, we certainly meet here from all corners of the world! How do you do, Mrs. Starck? You're looking well after your journey.

Mrs. Starck. Thanks, dear Axel, we have certainly had a delightful trip. But where is Bertha?

Carl. Yes, where is the young wife?

Axel. She's out at the studio, but she'll be home at any moment now. But won't you sit down?

[*The doctor greets the visitors.*]

Carl. Hardly. We were passing by and thought we would just look in to see how you are. But we shall be on hand, of course, for your invitation for Saturday, the first of May.

Axel. That's good. You got the card then?

Mrs. Starck. Yes, we received it while we were in Hamburg. Well, what is Bertha doing nowadays?

Axel. Oh, she paints, as I do. In fact, we're expecting her model, and as he may come at any moment, perhaps I can't ask you to sit down after all, if I'm going to be honest.

Carl. Do you think we would blush, then?

Mrs. Starck. He isn't nude, is he?

Axel. Of course.

Carl. A man? The devil!—No, I couldn't allow my wife to be mixed up with anything of that sort. Alone with a naked man!

Axel. I see you still have prejudices, Carl.

Carl. Yes, you know——

Mrs. Starck. Fie!

Dr. Östermark. Yes, that's what I say, too.

Axel. I can't deny that it is not alto-

gether to my taste, but as long as I must have a woman model——

Mrs. Starck. That's another matter.

Axel. Another?

Mrs. Starck. Yes, it is another matter—although it resembles the other, it is not the same. [*There is a knock.*]

Axel. There he is!

Mrs. Starck. We'll go, then. Good-bye and au revoir. Give my love to Bertha.

Axel. Good-bye, then, as you're so scared. And au revoir.

Carl and Dr. Östermark. Good-bye, Axel.

Carl. [*To* AXEL.] You stay in here, at least, while——

Axel. No, why should I?

Carl. [*Goes shaking his head.*] Ugh!

[AXEL *alone starts to paint. There is a knock.*]

Axel. Come in. [THE MODEL *enters.*] So, you are back again. Madame hasn't returned yet.

The Model. But it's almost twelve, and I must keep another appointment.

Axel. Is that so? It's too bad, but—h'm—something must have detained her at the studio. How much do I owe you?

The Model. Five francs, as usual.

Axel. [*Paying him.*] There. Perhaps you'd better wait a while, nevertheless.

The Model. Yes, if I'm needed.

Axel. Yes, be kind enough to wait a few minutes.

[THE MODEL *retires behind a screen.* AXEL *alone, draws and whistles.* BERTHA *comes in after a moment.*]

Axel. Hello, my dear! So you're back at last?

Bertha. At last?

Axel. Yes, your model is waiting.

Bertha. [*Startled.*] No! No! Has he been here again?

Axel. You had engaged him for eleven o'clock.

Bertha. I? No! Did he say that?

Axel. Yes. But I heard you when you made the engagement yesterday.

Bertha. Perhaps it's so, then, but anyway the professor wouldn't let us leave and you know how nervous one gets in the last hours. You're not angry with me, Axel?

Axel. Angry? No. But this is the second time, and he gets his five francs for nothing, nevertheless.

Bertha. Can I help it if the professor keeps us? Why must you always pick on me?

Axel. Do I pick on you?

Bertha. What's that? Didn't you——

Axel. Yes, yes, yes! I picked on you—forgive me—forgive me—for thinking that it was your fault.

Bertha. Well, it's all right then. But what did you pay him with?

Axel. To be sure. Gaga paid back the twenty francs he owed me.

Bertha. [*Takes out account-book.*] So, he paid you back? Come on, then, and I'll put it down, for the sake of order. It's your money, so of course you can dispose of it as you please, but as you wish me to take care of the accounts—[*Writes.*] fifteen francs in, five francs out, model. There.

Axel. No. Look here. It's twenty francs in.

Bertha. Yes, but there are only fifteen here.

Axel. Yes, but you should put down twenty.

Bertha. Why do you argue?

Axel. Did I—Well, the man's waiting——

Bertha. Oh, yes. Be good and get things ready for me.

Axel. [*Puts model stand in place. Calls to* MODEL.] Are you undressed yet?

The Model. [*From back of screen.*] Soon, monsieur.

Bertha. [*Closes door, puts wood in stove.*] There, now you must go out.

Axel. [*Hesitating.*] Bertha!

Bertha. Yes?

Axel. Is it absolutely necessary—with a nude model?

Bertha. Absolutely!

Axel. H'm—indeed!

Bertha. We have certainly argued that matter out.

Axel. Quite true. But it's loathsome nevertheless—— [*Goes out right.*]

Bertha. [*Takes up brushes and palette. Calls to* MODEL.] Are you ready?

The Model. All ready.

Bertha. Come on, then. [*Pause.*] Come on. [*There is a knock.*] Who is it? I have a model.

Willmer. [*Outside.*] Willmer. With news from the salon.

Bertha. From the salon! [*To* MODEL.]

Dress yourself! We'll have to postpone the sitting.—Axel! Willmer is here with news from the salon.

[Axel *comes in, also* Willmer; The Model *goes out unnoticed during the following scene.*]

Willmer. Hello, dear friends! Tomorrow the jury will begin its work. Oh, Bertha, here are our pastels. [*Takes package from pocket.*]

Bertha. Thanks, my good Gaga; how much did they cost? They must have been expensive.

Willmer. Oh, not very.

Bertha. So they are to start tomorrow. So soon? Do you hear, Axel?

Axel. Yes, my friend.

Bertha. Now, will you be very good, very, very good?

Axel. I always want to be good to you, my friend.

Bertha. You do? Now, listen. You know Roubey, don't you?

Axel. Yes, I met him in Vienna and we became good friends, as it's called.

Bertha. You know that he is on the jury?

Axel. And then what?

Bertha. Well—now you'll be angry, I know you will.

Axel. You know it? Don't prove it, then.

Bertha. [*Coaxing.*] You wouldn't make a sacrifice for your wife, would you?

Axel. Go begging? No, I don't want to do that.

Bertha. Not for me? You'll get in anyway, but for your wife!

Axel. Don't ask me.

Bertha. I should really never ask you for anything!

Axel. Yes, for things that I can do without sacrificing——

Bertha. Your man's pride!

Axel. Let it go at that.

Bertha. But I would sacrifice my woman's pride if I could help you.

Axel. You women have no pride.

Bertha. Axel!

Axel. Well, well, pardon, pardon!

Bertha. You must be jealous. I don't believe you would really like it if I were accepted at the salon.

Axel. Nothing would make me happier. Believe me, Bertha.

Bertha. Would you be happy, too, if I were accepted and you were refused?

Axel. I must feel and see. [*Puts his hand over his heart.*] No, that would be decidedly disagreeable, decidedly. In the first place, because I paint better than you do, and because——

Bertha. [*Walking up and down.*] Speak out. Because I am a woman!

Axel. Yes, just that. It may seem strange, but to me it's as if you women were intruding and plundering where we have fought for so long while you sat by the fire. Forgive me, Bertha, for talking like this, but such thoughts have occurred to me.

Bertha. Has it ever occurred to you that you're exactly like all other men?

Axel. Like all others? I should hope so!

Bertha. And you have become so superior lately. You didn't use to be like that.

Axel. It must be because I am superior! Doing something that we men have never done before!

Bertha. What! What are you saying! Shame on you!

Willmer. There, there, good friends! No, but, dear friends—Bertha, control yourself. [*He gives her a look which she tries to make out.*]

Bertha. [*Changing.*] Axel, let's be friends! And hear me a moment. Do you think that my position in your house—for it is yours—is agreeable to me? You support me, you pay for my studying at Julian's, while your yourself cannot afford instruction. Don't you think I see how you sit and wear out yourself and your talent on these pot-boiling drawings, and are able to paint only in leisure moments? You haven't been able to afford models for yourself, while you pay mine five hard-earned francs an hour. You don't know how good—how noble—how sacrificing you are, and also you don't know how I suffer to see you toil so for me. Oh, Axel, you can't know how I feel my position. What am I to you? Of what use am I in your house? Oh, I blush when I think about it!

Axel. What, what, what! Aren't you my wife?

Bertha. Yes, but——

Axel. Well, then?

Bertha. But you support me.

Axel. Well, isn't that the right thing to do?

Bertha. It was formerly—according to the old scheme of marriage, but we weren't

to have it like that. We were to be comrades.

Axel. What talk! Isn't a man to support his wife?

Bertha. I don't want it. And you, Axel, you must help me. I'm not your equal when it's like that, but I could be if you would humble yourself once, just once! Don't think that you are alone in going to one of the jury to say a good word for another. If it were for yourself, it would be another matter, but for me—Forgive me! Now I beg of you as nicely as I know how. Lift me from my humiliating position to your side, and I'll be so grateful I shall never trouble you again with reminding you of my position. Never, Axel!

Axel. Don't ask me; you know how weak I am.

Bertha. [*Embracing him.*] Yes, I shall ask you—beg of you, until you fulfil my prayer. Now, don't look so proud, but be human! So! [*Kisses him.*]

Axel. [*To* Willmer.] Look here, Gaga, don't you think that women are terrible tyrants?

Willmer. [*Pained.*] Yes, and especially when they are submissive.

Bertha. See, now, the sky is clear again. You'll go, won't you, Axel? Get on your black coat now, and go. Then come home, and we'll strike out together for something to eat.

Axel. How do you know that Roubey is receiving now?

Bertha. Don't you think that I made sure of that?

Axel. What a schemer you are!

Bertha. [*Takes a black cutaway coat from wardrobe.*] Well, one would never get anywhere without a little wire-pulling, you know. Here's your black coat. So!

Axel. Yes. But this is awful. What am I to say to the man?

Bertha. H'm. Oh, you'll hit on something on the way. Say that—that—that your wife—no—that you're expecting a christening——

Axel. Fie, Bertha.

Bertha. Well, say that you can get him decorated, then.

Axel. Really you frighten me, Bertha!

Bertha. Say what you please, then. Come, now, and I'll fix your hair so you'll be presentable. Do you know his wife?

Axel. No, not at all.

Bertha. [*Brushing his hair.*] Then you must get an introduction to her. I understand that she has great influence, but that she doesn't like women.

Axel. What are you doing to my hair?

Bertha. I am fixing it as they are wearing it now.

Axel. Yes, but I don't want it that way.

Bertha. Now then—that's fine. Just mind me. [*She goes to a chiffonier and takes out a case which contains a Russian Annae order. She tries to put it in* Axel's *buttonhole.*]

Axel. No, Bertha. You've gone far enough now. I won't wear that decoration.

Bertha. But you accepted it.

Axel. Yes, because I couldn't decline it. But I'll never wear it.

Bertha. Do you belong to some political party that is so liberal-minded as to suppress individual freedom to accept distinctions?

Axel. No, I don't. But I belong to a circle of comrades who have promised each other not to wear their merit on their coats.

Bertha. But who have accepted salon medals!

Axel. Which are not worn on their coats.

Bertha. What do you say to this, Gaga?

Willmer. As long as distinctions exist, one does one's self harm to go about with the mark of infamy, and the example no one is likely to follow. Take them away for all of me—I certainly can't get them away from the others.

Axel. Yes, and when my comrades who are more deserving than I do not wear them, I would lower them by wearing the emblem.

Bertha. But it doesn't show under your overcoat. No one will know, and you won't brand any one.

Willmer. Bertha is right there. You'll wear your order *under* your coat, not *on* your coat.

Axel. Jesuits! When you are given a finger, you take the whole arm.

[Abel *comes in wearing fur coat and cap.*]

Bertha. Oh, here's Abel! Come on, now, and settle this controversy.

Abel. Hello, Bertha! Hello, Axel! How are you, Gaga? What's the matter?

Bertha. Axel doesn't want to wear his

order, because he daren't on account of his comrades.

Abel. Comrades come before a wife, of course—that's an unwritten law. [*She sits by the table, takes up tobacco and rolls a cigarette.*]

Bertha. [*Fastens ribbon in* AXEL'S *buttonhole and puts the star back in case.*] He can help me without hurting any one, but I fear he would rather hurt me!

Axel. Bertha, Bertha! But you people will drive me mad! I don't consider it a crime to wear this ribbon, nor have I taken any oath that I wouldn't do so, but at our exhibitions it's considered cowardly not to dare to make one's way without them.

Bertha. Cowardly, of course! But you're not going to take your own course this time—but mine!

Abel. You owe it to the woman who has consecrated her life to you to be her delegate.

Axel. I feel that what you people are saying is false, but I haven't the time or energy to answer you now; but there is an answer! It's as if you were drawing a net about me while I sit absorbed in my work. I can feel the net winding about me, but my foot gets entangled when I want to kick it aside. But, you wait, if only I free my hands, I'll get out my knife and cut the meshes of your net! What were we talking about? Oh, yes, I was going to make a call. Give me my gloves and my overcoat. Good-bye, Bertha! Good-bye. Oh, yes,—where does Roubey live?

Willmer, Abel and Bertha. [*In unison.*] Sixty-five Rue des Martyrs.

Axel. Why, that's right near here!

Bertha. Just at the corner. Thanks, Axel, for going. Does the sacrifice feel very heavy?

Axel. I can't feel anything but that I am tired of all this talk and that it will be delightful to get out. Good-bye.

[*Goes out.*]

Abel. It's too bad about Axel. It's a pity. Did you know that he is refused?

Bertha. And I, then?

Abel. That's not settled yet. As you wrote your own name with French spelling, you won't be reached until O.

Bertha. There's still hope for me?

Abel. Yes, for you, but not for Axel.

Willmer. Now, we'll see something!

Bertha. How do you know that he is refused?

Abel. H'm, I met a "hors concours" who knew, and I was quite prepared to witness a scene when I came in here. But of course he hasn't received the notice yet.

Bertha. No, not that I know of. But, Abel, are you sure that Axel will meet Madame Roubey and not Monsieur?

Abel. What should he see Monsieur Roubey for? He hasn't any say about it, but she is president of the Woman-Painters Protective Society.

Bertha. And I am not refused—yet?

Abel. No, as I said, and Axel's call is bound to do good. He has a Russian order, and everything Russian is very popular in Paris just now. But it's too bad about Axel just the same.

Bertha. Too bad? Why? They haven't room for everybody on the salon walls. There are so many women refused that a man might put up with it and be made to feel it for once. But if I get in now—we'll soon hear how *he* painted my picture, how *he* has taught me, how *he* has paid for my lessons. But I shall not take any notice of that, because it isn't true.

Willmer. Well, we're bound to see something unusual happen now.

Bertha. No, I believe—granted that I am not refused—that we'll see something very usual. But nevertheless I'm afraid of the actual moment. Something tells me that things won't be right between Axel and me again.

Abel. And it was just when you were equals that things were going to be right.

Willmer. It seems to me that your position will be much more clearly defined and much pleasanter when you can sell your pictures and support yourself.

Bertha. It should be! We'll see—we'll see! [*The maid enters with a green letter.*] A green letter for Axel! Here it is! Here it is! He is refused! Yes, but this is terrible; however, it will be a consolation to me if I should be refused.

Abel. But if you are not refused?

Bertha. [*Pause.*]

Abel. You won't answer that?

Bertha. No, I won't answer that.

Abel. Because, if you are accepted, the equality will be destroyed, as you will be his superior.

Bertha. Superior? A wife superior to her husband—her husband—oh!

Willmer. It's about time an example was made.

Abel. [*To* BERTHA.] You were at the luncheon today? Was it interesting?

Bertha. Oh, yes.

Willmer. When are you going to review my book, Abel?

Abel. I'm just working on it.

Willmer. Are you going to be nice to me?

Abel. Very nice.—Well, Bertha, how and when will you deliver the letter?

Bertha. [*Walking about.*] That is just what I am thinking about. If he hasn't met Madame Roubey, and if he hasn't carried out our plan, he will hardly do it after receiving this blow.

Abel. [*Rising.*] I don't think Axel is so base as to revenge himself on you.

Bertha. Base? Such talk! Didn't he go just now when I wanted him to, because I am his wife? Do you think he would ever have gone for any one else?

Abel. Would you like it if he had done it for some one else?

Bertha. Good-bye to you—you must go now, before he returns!

Abel. That's what I think. Good-bye, Bertha.

Willmer. Yes, we had better get away. Good-bye for now.

[*The* MAID *enters and announces* MRS. HALL.]

Bertha. Who? Mrs. Hall? Who can that be?

Abel and Willmer. Good-bye, Bertha.

[*They go out.* MRS. HALL *comes in. She is flashily though carelessly dressed. She looks like an adventuress.*]

Mrs. Hall. I don't know that I have the honor to be known to you, but you are Mrs. Alberg, née Alund, are you not?

Bertha. Yes, I'm Mrs. Alberg. Won't you sit down?

Mrs. Hall. My name is Hall. [*Sits.*] Oh, my lord, but I'm so tired! I have walked up so many stairs—oh-ho-ho-ho, I believe I'll faint!

Bertha. How can I be of service to you?

Mrs. Hall. You know Doctor Östermark, don't you?

Bertha. Yes, he's an old friend of mine.

Mrs. Hall. An old friend. Well, you see, dear Mrs. Alberg, I was married to him once, but we separated. I am his divorced wife.

Bertha. Oh! He has never told me about that.

Mrs. Hall. Oh, people don't tell such things.

Bertha. He told me he was a widower.

Mrs. Hall. Well, you were a young girl then, and I suppose he isn't so anxious to have it known anyway.

Bertha. And I who have always believed that Doctor Östermark was an honorable man!

Mrs. Hall. [*Sarcastic.*] Yes, he's a good one! He is a real gentleman, I must say.

Bertha. Well, but why do you tell me all this?

Mrs. Hall. Just wait, my dear Mrs. Alberg—wait and you shall hear. You are a member of the society, aren't you?

Bertha. Yes, I am.

Mrs. Hall. Just so; only wait now.

Bertha. Did you have any children?

Mrs. Hall. Two—two daughters, Mrs. Alberg.

Bertha. That's another matter! And he left you in want?

Mrs. Hall. Just wait now! He gave us a small allowance, not enough for the rent even. And now that the girls are grown up and about to start in life, now he writes us that he is a bankrupt and that he can't send us more than half the allowance. Isn't that nice, just now, when the girls are grown up and are going out into life?

Bertha. We must look into this. He'll be here in a few days. Do you know that you have the law on your side and that the courts can force him to pay? And he shall be forced to do so. Do you understand? So, he can bring children into the world and then leave them empty-handed with the poor, deserted mother. Oh, he'll find out something very different! Will you give me your address?

Mrs. Hall. [*Gives her card.*] You are so good, Mrs. Alberg. And you won't be vexed with me if I ask a little favor of you?

Bertha. You can depend on me entirely. I shall write the secretary immediately——

Mrs. Hall. Oh, you're so good, but before the secretary can answer, I and my poor children will probably be thrown out into the street. Dear Mrs. Alberg, you couldn't

lend me a trifle—just wait—a trifle of twenty francs?

Bertha. No, dear lady, I haven't any money. My husband supports me for the time being, and you may be sure that I'm reminded of the fact. It's bitter to eat the bread of charity when one is young, but better times are coming for me too.

Mrs. Hall. My dear, good Mrs. Alberg, you must not refuse me. If you do, I am a lost woman. Help me, for heaven's sake.

Bertha. Are you terribly in need?

Mrs. Hall. And you ask me that!

Bertha. I'll let you have this money as a loan. [*She goes to chiffonier.*] Twenty, forty, sixty, eighty—lacking twenty. What did I do with it? H'm luncheon, of course! [*She writes in account-book.*] Paints twenty, incidentals twenty—there you are.

Mrs. Hall. Thank you, my good Mrs. Alberg, thanks, dear lady.

Bertha. There, there. But I can't give you any more time today. So, good-bye, and depend on me.

Mrs. Hall. [*Uncertain.*] Just a moment now.

Bertha. [*Listening without.*] No, you must go now.

Mrs. Hall. Just a moment. What was I going to say?—Well, it doesn't matter.

[*Goes out.* BERTHA *is alone for a moment, when she hears* AXEL *coming. She hides the green letter in her pocket.*]

Bertha. Back already? Well, did you meet her—him?

Axel. I didn't meet him, but her, which was much better. I congratulate you, Bertha. Your picture is already accepted!

Bertha. Oh, no! What are you saying? And yours?

Axel. It isn't decided yet—but it will surely go through, too.

Bertha. Are you sure of that?

Axel. Of course ——

Bertha. Oh, I'm accepted! Good, how good! But why don't you congratulate me?

Axel. Haven't I? I'm quite sure that I said, "I congratulate you!" For that matter, one mustn't sell the skin before the bear is killed. To get into the salon isn't anything. It's just a toss-up. It can even depend on what letter one's name begins with. You come in O, as you spelled your name in French. When the lettering starts with M it's always easier.

Bertha. So, you wish to say that perhaps I got in because my name begins with O?

Axel. Not on account of that alone.

Bertha. And if you are refused, it's because your name begins with A.

Axel. Not exactly that alone, but it might be on that account.

Bertha. Look here, I don't think you're as honorable as you would seem. You are jealous.

Axel. Why should I be, when I don't know what has happened to me yet?

Bertha. But when you do know?

Axel. What? [BERTHA *takes out letter.* AXEL *puts his hand to his heart and sits in a chair.*] What! [*Controls himself.*] That was a blow I had not expected. That was most disagreeable!

Bertha. Well, I suppose I'll have to help you now.

Axel. You seem to be filled with malicious delight, Bertha. Oh, I feel that a great hate is beginning to grow in here. [*Indicating his breast.*]

Bertha. Perhaps I look delighted because I've had a success, but when one is tied to a man who cannot rejoice in another's good fortune, it's difficult to sympathize with his misfortune.

Axel. I don't know why, but it seems as if we had become enemies now. The strife of position has come between us, and we can never be friends any more.

Bertha. Can't your sense of justice bend and recognize me as the abler, the victorious one in the strife?

Axel. You are not the abler.

Bertha. The jury must have thought so, however.

Axel. But surely you know that I paint better than you do.

Bertha. Are you so sure of that?

Axel. Yes, I am. But for that matter—you worked under better conditions than I. You didn't have to do any pot-boiling, you could go to the studio, you had models, and you were a woman!

Bertha. Yes, now I'll hear how I have lived on you ——

Axel. Between ourselves, yes, but the world won't know unless you go and tell it yourself.

Bertha. Oh, the world knows that already.

But tell me, why don't you suffer when a comrade, a man comrade, is accepted, although he has less merit than you?

Axel. I'll have to think about that. You see our feeling toward you women has never been critical—we've taken you as a matter of course, and so I've never thought about our relations as against each other. Now when the shoe pinches, it strikes me that we are not comrades, for this experience makes me feel that you women do not belong here. [*Indicating the studio.*] A comrade is a more or less loyal competitor; we are enemies. You women have been lying down in the rear while we attacked the enemy. And now, when we have set and supplied the table, you pounce down upon it as if you were in your own home!

Bertha. Oh, fie, have we ever been allowed in the conflict?

Axel. You have always been allowed, but you have never wanted to take part, or haven't been able to do so in our domain, where you are now breaking in. Technic had to be put through its whole development and completion by us before you entered. And now you buy the centurions' work for ten francs an hour in a studio, and with money that we have acquired by our work.

Bertha. You are not honorable now, Axel.

Axel. When was I honorable? When I allowed you to use me like an old shoe? But now you are my superior—and now I can't strive to be honorable any longer. Do you know that this adversity will also change our economic relations? I cannot think of painting any more, but must give up my life's dream and become a potboiler in earnest.

Bertha. You needn't do that; when I can sell, I will support myself.

Axel. For that matter, what sort of an alliance have we gone into? Marriage should be built on common interests; ours is built on opposing interests.

Bertha. You can work all that out by yourself; I'm going out for dinner now,—are you coming.

Axel. No, I want to be alone with my unhappiness.

Bertha. And I want company for my happiness.—But we have invited people to come here for the evening—that won't do now, with your misery, will it?

Axel. It isn't a very brilliant prospect, but there's no way out. Let them come.

Bertha. [*Dressing to go out.*] But you must be here, or it will look as if you were cowardly.

Axel. I'll be with you, don't worry—but give me a bit of money before you go.

Bertha. We've reached the end of our cash.

Axel. The end?

Bertha. Yes, money comes to an end too!

Axel. Can you lend me ten francs?

Bertha. [*Taking out pocketbook.*] Ten francs? Yes, indeed, if I have it. Here you are. Won't you come along? Tell me. They'll think it rather strange!

Axel. And play the defeated lion before the triumphant chariot? No, indeed, I'll need my time to learn my part for this evening's performance.

Bertha. Good-bye then.

Axel. Good-bye, Bertha. Let me ask you one thing.

Bertha. What then?

Axel. Don't come home intoxicated. It would be more disagreeable today than ever.

Bertha. Does it concern you how I come home?

Axel. Well, I feel sort of responsible for you, as for a relative, considering that you bear the same name that I do, and besides, it is still disgusting to me to see a woman intoxicated.

Bertha. Why is it any more disgusting than to see a man intoxicated?

Axel. Yes, why? Perhaps because you don't bear being seen without a disguise.

Bertha. [*Starting.*] Good-bye, you old talking-machine. You won't come along?

Axel. No!

[Bertha *goes out;* Axel *rises, takes off his cutaway to change it for working coat.*]

ACT TWO

Same scene as Act One, but there is a large table with chairs around it in middle of scene. On table there is writing material and a speaker's gavel. Axel *is painting.* Abel *is sitting near him. She is smoking.*

Axel. They have finished dinner and are having their coffee now. Did they drink much?

Abel. Oh, yes, and Bertha bragged and was disagreeable.

Axel. Tell me one thing, Abel, are you my friend, or not?

Abel. H'm—I don't know.

Axel. Can I trust you?

Abel. No—you can't.

Axel. Why not?

Abel. Oh, I just feel that you can't.

Axel. Tell me, Abel, you who have the common sense of a man and can be reasoned with, tell me how it feels to be a woman. Is it so awful?

Abel. [*Jokingly.*] Yes, of course. It feels like being a nigger.

Axel. That's strange. Listen, Abel. You know that I have a passion for equity and justice——

Abel. I know you are a visionary—and that's why things will never go well with you.

Axel. But things go well with you—because you never feel anything?

Abel. Yes.

Axel. Abel, have you really never had any desire to love a man?

Abel. How silly you are!

Axel. Have you never found anyone?

Abel. No, men are very scarce.

Axel. H'm, don't you consider me a man?

Abel. You! No!

Axel. That's what I fancied myself to be.

Abel. Are you a man? You, who work for a woman and go around dressed like a woman?

Axel. What? I, dressed like a woman?

Abel. The way you wear your hair and go around bare-necked, while she wears stiff collars and short hair; be careful, she'll soon take your trousers away from you.

Axel. How you talk!

Abel. And what is your position in your own house? You beg money from her, and she puts you under her guardianship. No, you are not a man! But that's why she took you, when her affairs were in bad shape.

Axel. You hate Bertha; what have you against her?

Abel. I don't know, but perhaps I, too, have been struck with that same passion for justice.

Axel. Look here. Don't you believe in your great cause any longer?

Abel. Sometimes! Sometimes not! What can one believe in any more? Sometimes it strikes me that the old ways were better. As mothers we had an honored and respected position when in that way we fulfilled our duty as citizens; as housewives we were a great power, and to bring up a family was not an ignominious occupation. Give me a cognac, Axel. We have talked so much.

Axel. [*Getting cognac.*] Why do you drink?

Abel. I don't know. If one could only find the exceptional man!

Axel. What sort would that be?

Abel. The man who rules a woman!

Axel. Well, and if you found one?

Abel. Then I would—as they say—fall in love with him. Think if this whole noise were *blague*. Think!

Axel. No, there is surely life, motion in the movement, whatever it is.

Abel. Yes, there's so much motion—forward and backward! And a good deal of folly can come of the "motion," if they only get the majority for it.

Axel. If it turns out that way, then you've made a damned lot of noise uselessly, for now it's beginning to be loathsome to live.

Abel. We make so much noise that we make your heads reel. That's the trouble! Well, Axel, your position will be freer now that Bertha has been able to sell.

Axel. Sell! Has she sold a picture?

Abel. Don't you know that? The small picture with the apple-tree.

Axel. No, she hasn't said anything about it. When did it happen?

Abel. Day before yesterday. Don't you know about it? Well, then she intends to surprise you with the money.

Axel. Surprise me? She takes care of the cash herself.

Abel. So! Then it will—Hush, she is coming. [BERTHA *comes in.*]

Bertha. [*To* ABEL.] Oh, good evening; are you here? What made you leave us?

Abel. I thought it was tiresome.

Bertha. Yes, there is no fun in rejoicing for others!

Abel. No!

Bertha. [*To* AXEL.] And you sit diligently niggling, I see.

Axel. Yes, I'm daubing away.

Bertha. Let me see! That's very good indeed—but the left arm is far too long.

Axel. Do you think so?

Bertha. Think so? Can't I see that it is? Give me the brush and— [*She takes brush.*]

Axel. No, let me alone. Aren't you ashamed?

Bertha. What's that?

Axel. [*Vexed.*] Shame, I said. [*Rises.*] Are you trying to teach me how to paint?

Bertha. Why not?

Axel. Because you have still much to learn from me. But I can learn nothing from you.

Bertha. It seems to me that the gentleman is not very respectful to his wife. One should bear in mind the respect one owes to——

Abel. Now you're old-fashioned. What particular respect does a man owe a woman if they are to be equals?

Bertha. [*To* Abel.] So you think it's all right for a man to be coarse with his wife?

Abel. Yes, when she is impudent to him.

Axel. That's right! Tear each other's eyes out!

Abel. Not at all! The whole thing is too insignificant for that.

Axel. Don't say that. Look here, Bertha, considering that our economic condition is to undergo a change from now on, won't you be so good as to let me see the account-book?

Bertha. What a noble revenge for being refused!

Axel. What revenge? What has the account-book got to do with my being turned down at the salon? Give me the key to the chiffonier.

Bertha. [*Feeling in her pocket.*] Very well. H'm! That's strange! I thought I just had it.

Axel. Find it!

Bertha. You speak in such a commanding tone. I don't like that.

Axel. Come now, find the key.

Bertha. [*Looking here and there in the room.*] Yes, but I can't understand it; I can't find it. It must be lost some way.

Axel. Are you sure that you haven't got it?

Bertha. Absolutely sure.

[Axel *rings; after a moment the* Maid *comes in.*]

Axel. [*To* Maid.] Go fetch a locksmith.

Maid. A locksmith?

Axel. Yes, a smith who can pick a lock.

[Bertha *gives the* Maid *a look.*]

Maid. Right away, monsieur.

[Maid *goes out.* Axel *changes his coat, discovers the order on the lapel, tears it off and throws it on the table.*]

Axel. Pardon me, ladies!

Bertha. [*Mildly.*] Don't mind us. Are you going out?

Axel. I am going out.

Bertha. Aren't you going to stay for the meeting?

Axel. No, I am not!

Bertha. Yes, but they will think that very discourteous.

Axel. Let them. I have more important things to do than listening to the drivel of you women.

Bertha. [*Worried.*] Where are you going?

Axel. I don't need to account for myself, as I don't ask you to account for your actions.

Bertha. You won't forget that we have invited guests for the masquerade tomorrow evening?

Axel. Guests? That's true, tomorrow evening. H'm!

Bertha. It won't do to postpone it when both Östermark and Carl have arrived today, and I have asked them to come.

Axel. So much the better!

Bertha. And now come home early enough to try on your costume.

Axel. My costume? Yes, of course; I am to take the part of a woman.

[*The* Maid *enters.*]

Maid. The smith hasn't time now but he'll come within two hours.

Axel. He hasn't time, eh? Well, perhaps the key will turn up anyway. However, I must be off now. Good-bye.

Bertha. [*Very mild.*] Good-bye then. Don't come home late.

Axel. I don't know just what I will do. Good-bye.

[Abel *nods good-bye,* Axel *goes out.*]

Abel. How very cocky his lordship was!

Bertha. Such impudence! Do you know, I had a good mind to tame him, break him so that he'd come back crawling to me.

Abel. Yes, that tweak the salon disap-

pointment gave him doesn't seem to have taken all the spunk out of him. Bertha, tell me, have you ever loved that clown?

Bertha. Loved him? I liked him very much because he was nice to me. But he is so silly and—when he nags as he did just now, I feel that I could hate him. Think of it, it's already around that he painted my picture!

Abel. Well, if it's gone as far as that, then you must do something éclatant.

Bertha. If I only knew how!

Abel. I'm usually inventive. Let me see. Look here, why couldn't you have his refused picture brought home just as all your friends have gathered here?

Bertha. No, that would look as if I wanted to triumph. No, that would be too terrible.

Abel. Yes, but if I should have it done? Or Gaga, that would be better still. It would be sent here in Axel's name by the porter. It's got to come home anyway, and it's no secret that it was refused.

Bertha. No, but you know ——

Abel. What? Hasn't he spread false reports, and haven't you the right to defend yourself?

Bertha. I would like it to happen very much, but I don't want to have anything to do with the doing of it. I want to be able to stand and swear that I am quite clean and innocent.

Abel. You shall be able to do so. I'll attend to it.

Bertha. What do you think he wanted the account-book for? He has never asked to see it before. Do you think he has some scheme in his head about it?

Abel. Ye-es! Doubtless. He wants to see if you've accounted for the three hundred francs you got for your picture.

Bertha. What picture?

Abel. The one you sold to Madame Roubey.

Bertha. How do you know about that?

Abel. The whole crowd knows about it.

Bertha. And Axel, too?

Abel. Yes. I happened to mention it because I thought he knew. It was stupid of you not to tell him.

Bertha. Does it concern him if I sell a ——

Abel. Yes, in a way, of course it concerns him.

Bertha. Well, then, I will explain that I didn't want to give him another disappointment after he had already had the unhappiness of seeing me accepted at the salon.

Abel. Strictly speaking, he has nothing to do with your earnings, as you have a marriage compact, and you have every reason to be tight with him. Just to establish a precedent, buck up and stand your own ground when he returns with his lecture tonight.

Bertha. Oh, I know how to take care of him. But—another matter. How are we to treat the Östermark case?

Abel. Östermark—yes, he is my great enemy. You had better let me take care of him. We have an old account that is still unsettled, he and I. Calm yourself on that score. I'll make him yield, for we have the law on our side.

Bertha. What do you intend to do?

Abel. Invite Mrs. Hall and her two daughters here for tomorrow night, and then we will find out how he takes it.

Bertha. No, indeed, no scandal in my house!

Abel. Why not? Can you deny yourself such a triumph? If it's war, one must kill one's enemies, not just wound them. And now it is war. Am I right?

Bertha. Yes, but a father, and his wife and daughters whom he has not seen for eighteen years!

Abel. Well, he'll have a chance to see them now.

Bertha. You're terrible, Abel!

Abel. I'm a little stronger than you, that's all. Marriage must have softened you. Do you live as married people, h'm?

Bertha. How foolish you are!

Abel. You have irritated Axel; you have trampled on him. But he can yet bite your heel.

Bertha. Do you think he would dare to do anything?

Abel. I believe he'll create a scene when he comes home.

Bertha. Well, I shall give him as good as he sends ——

Abel. If you only can! But that business about the chiffonier key—that was foolish, very foolish.

Bertha. Perhaps it was foolish. But he

will be nice enough again after he has had an airing. I know him.

[*The* MAID *comes in with a package.*]

Maid. A messenger brought this costume for monsieur.

Bertha. Very well, let me have it. That's fine!

Maid. But it must be for madame, as it's a lady's costume.

Bertha. No, that's all right. It's for monsieur.

Maid. But, heavens! is monsieur to wear dresses too?

Bertha. Why not, when we have to wear them? But you may leave us now.

[MAID *goes out.* BERTHA *opens bundle and takes out Spanish costume.*]

Abel. But that is certainly well thought out. Oh, it's beautiful to avenge anyone's stupidities.

[WILLMER *comes in with a messenger, who carries a package.* WILLMER *is dressed in black frock coat with lapels faced with white, a flower in buttonhole, knee breeches, red cravat, and turned over cuffs.*]

Willmer. Good evening; are you alone? Here are the candles and here are the bottles. One chartreuse and two vermouth; here are two packages of tobacco and the rest of the things.

Bertha. Well, but you are a good boy, Gaga!

Willmer. And here is the receipted bill.

Bertha. Is it paid? Then you have spent money again?

Willmer. We'll have plenty of time to settle that. But you must hurry now, as the old lady will soon be here.

Bertha. Then be good enough to open the bottles while I fix the candles.

Willmer. Of course I will.

[BERTHA *opens package of candles at table;* WILLMER *stands beside her, taking the wrappers from bottles.*]

Abel. You look quite family-like as you stand there together. You might have made quite a nice little husband, Gaga.

[WILLMER *puts his arm around* BERTHA *and kisses her on the neck.* BERTHA *turns on* WILLMER *and slaps his face.*]

Bertha. Aren't you ashamed, you little hornet! What are you up to, anyway?

Abel. If you can stand that, Gaga, then you can stand the knife.

Willmer. [*Angry.*] Little hornet? Don't you know who I am? Don't you know that I'm an author of rank?

Bertha. You! who write nothing but trash!

Willmer. It wasn't trash when I wrote for you.

Bertha. You only copied what we said, that was all!

Willmer. Take care, Bertha. You know that I can ruin you!

Bertha. So, you threaten, you little Fido! [*To* ABEL.] Shall we give the boy a spanking?

Abel. Think what you are saying!

Willmer. So! I've been a little Fido, who has been lying on your skirt; but don't forget that I can bite too.

Bertha. Let me see your teeth!

Willmer. No, but you shall feel them!

Bertha. Very well, come on then! Come!

Abel. Now, now, be quiet before you go too far.

Willmer. [*To* BERTHA.] Do you know what one has a right to say about a married woman who accepts presents from a young bachelor?

Bertha. Presents?

Willmer. You've accepted presents from me for two years.

Bertha. Presents! You should have a thrashing, you lying little snipe, always hanging around the petticoats! Don't you suppose I can squelch you?

Willmer. [*With a shrug.*] Perhaps.

Bertha. And you dare throw a shadow on a woman's honor!

Willmer. Honor! H'm! Does it do you any honor to have had me buy part of the household things which you have charged up to your husband?

Bertha. Leave my house, you scamp!

Willmer. Your house! Among comrades one is not careful, but among enemies one must count every hair! And you shall be compelled to go over the accounts with me —adventuress—depend on that! [*Goes out.*]

Abel. You will suffer for this foolishness! To let a friend leave you as an enemy—that's dangerous.

Bertha. Oh, let him do what he likes.

He dared to kiss me! He dared to remind me that I'm a woman.

Abel. Do you know, I believe a man will always have that in mind. You have been playing with fire.

Bertha. Fire! Can one ever find a man and a woman who can live like comrades without danger of fire?

Abel. No, I don't think so; as long as there are two sexes there is bound to be fire.

Bertha. Yes, but that must be done away with!

Abel. Yes—it must be—try it!

[*The* MAID *comes in; she is bursting with laughter.*]

Maid. There is a lady out here who calls herself—Richard—Richard Wahlström!

Bertha. [*Going toward door.*] Oh! Richard is here.

Abel. Oh, well then, if she has come, we can open the meeting. And now to see if we can disentangle your skein.

Bertha. Disentangle it, or cut it!

Abel. Or get caught in it!

ACT THREE

Same scéne. The hanging-lamp is lighted. Moonlight streams in, lighting up the studio window. There is a fire in the stove. BERTHA *and the* MAID *are discovered.* BERTHA *is dressed in a negligée with lace. She is sewing on the Spanish costume. The* MAID *is cutting out a frill.*

Bertha. There's no fun sitting up waiting for one's husband.

Maid. Do you think it is more fun for him to sit and wait for madame? This is the first time that he has been out alone ——

Bertha. Well, what does he do when he sits here alone?

Maid. He paints on pieces of wood.

Bertha. On wooden panels?

Maid. Yes, he has big piles of wood that he paints on.

Bertha. H'm! Tell me one thing, Ida; has monsieur ever been familiar with you?

Maid. Oh, never! No, he is such a proper gentleman.

Bertha. Are you sure?

Maid. [*Positive.*] Does madame think that I am such a ——

Bertha.—What time is it now?

Maid. It must be along toward twelve.

Bertha. Very well. Then you may go to bed.

Maid. Won't you be afraid to be alone with all these skeletons?

Bertha. I, afraid?—Hush, someone is coming through the gate—so, good night to you.

Maid. Good night, Madame. Sleep well.

[*Goes out.* BERTHA *alone; she puts the work away; throws herself on the couch, arranges lace on her gown, then she jumps up, turns down the lamp to half-light, then returns to couch and pretends to sleep. A pause before* AXEL *enters.*]

Axel. Is anyone here? Are you here, Bertha? [BERTHA *is silent.* AXEL *goes to her.*] Are you asleep?

Bertha. [*Softly.*] Ah, is it you, my friend? Good evening! I was lying here and fell asleep, and I had such a bad dream.

Axel. Now you are lying, for I saw you thro' the window from the garden when you took this pose. [BERTHA *jumps up.*]

Axel. [*Quietly.*] And we don't want any seductive scenes in nightgowns, nor any melodramas. Be calm and listen to what I am going to tell you.

[*He sits down in the middle of the room.*]

Bertha. What have you got to tell me?

Axel. A whole lot of things; but I shall begin with the ending. We must dissolve this concubinage.

Bertha. What? [*Throwing herself on the couch.*] Oh, my God, what am I not made to live through!

Axel. No hysteria, or I will empty the water bottle on your laces!

Bertha. This is your revenge because I defeated you in an open competition!

Axel. That has no connection with this matter.

Bertha. You have never loved me!

Axel. Yes, I have loved you; that was my only motive for marrying you. But why did you marry me? Because you were hard up, and because you had green sickness!

Bertha. It's fortunate that no one can hear us.

Axel. It would be no misfortune if anyone did hear us. I've treated you like a

comrade, with unlimited trust, and I've even made small sacrifices that you know about.—Has the locksmith been here yet?

Bertha. No, he didn't come.

Axel. It doesn't matter—I have looked over your accounts.

Bertha. So, you've been spying in my book, have you?

Axel. The household account-book is common property. You have entered false expenses and neglected to put down some of the income.

Bertha. Can I help it if we are not taught bookkeeping at school?

Axel. Nor are we. And as far as your bringing-up is concerned, you had things much better than I did; you went to a seminary, but I only went to a grade school.

Bertha. It's not books that bring one up——

Axel. No, it's the parents! But it's strange that they can't teach their daughters to be honorable——

Bertha. Honorable! I wonder if the majority of criminals are not to be found among men?

Axel. The majority of the punished, you should say; but of ninety-nine per cent. of criminal men one can ask with the judge, "Où est la femme?" But—to return to you. You have lied to me all the way through, and finally you have cheated me. For instance, you put down twenty francs for paints instead of for a twenty-franc luncheon at Marguery.

Bertha. That's not true; the luncheon only cost twelve francs.

Axel. That is to say, you put eight in your pocket. Then you have received three hundred francs for the picture that you sold.

BERTHA. "What a woman earns by her work, she also controls." That's what the law states.

Axel. That's not a paradox, then? Not monomania?

Bertha. No, it seems not.

Axel. Of course, we must not be petty; you control your earnings, and have controlled mine, in an unspeakable way; still, don't you think that, as comrades, you should have told me about the sale?

Bertha. That didn't concern you.

Axel. It didn't concern me? Well, then it only remains for me to bring suit for divorce.

Bertha. Divorce! Do you think I would stand the disgrace of being a divorced wife? Do you think that I will allow myself to be driven from my home, like a servant-maid who is sent away with her trunk?

Axel. I could throw you out into the street if I wished, but I shall do a more humane thing and get the divorce on the grounds of incompatibility of temperament.

Bertha. If you can talk like that, you have never loved me!

Axel. Tell me, why do you think I asked for your hand?

Bertha. Because you wanted me to love you.

Axel. Oh, holy, revered, uncorruptible stupidity—yes! I could accuse you of counterfeiting, for you have gone into debt to Willmer and made me responsible for the amount.

Bertha. Ah, the little insect! he has been talking, has he?

Axel. I just left him after paying him the three hundred and fifty francs for which you were indebted to him. But we mustn't be small about money matters, and we have more serious business to settle. You have allowed this scoundrel partially to pay for my household, and in doing so you have completely ruined my reputation. What have you done with the money?

Bertha. The whole thing is a lie.

Axel. Have you squandered it on luncheon and dinner parties?

Bertha. No, I have saved it; and that's something you have no conception of, spendthrift!

Axel. Oh, you saving soul! That negligée cost two hundred francs, and my dressing-gown cost twenty-five.

Bertha. Have you anything else to say to me?

Axel. Nothing else, except that you must think about supporting yourself from now on. I don't care to decorate wooden panels any more and let you reap the earnings.

Bertha. A-ha, you think you can so easily get out of the duty that you made yourself responsible for when you fooled me into becoming your wife? You shall see!

Axel. Now that I've had my eyes opened,

the past is beginning to take on another color. It seems to me almost as if you conjured that courtship of ours; it seems almost as if I had been the victim of what you women call seduction; it now seems to me as if I had fallen into the hands of an adventuress, who lured my money away from me in a *hôtel garni;* it seems almost as if I had lived in vice ever since I was united with you! [*Rising.*] And now, as you stand there with your back turned to me and I see your neck with your short hair, it is—yes, it is exactly as if—ugh!—as if you were Judith and had given your body to be able to behead me! Look, there is the dress I was going to wear, that you wished to humiliate me with. Yes, you felt that it was debasing to wear those things, and thought it disguised your desire to irritate, —this low-cut bodice and the corsets which were to advertise your woman's wares. No, I return your love-token and shake off the fetters. [*He throws down the wedding-ring.* BERTHA *looks at him in wonderment.* AXEL *pushes back his hair.*] You didn't want to see that my forehead is higher than yours, so I let my hair conceal it, so as not to humble and frighten you. But now I am going to humble you, and since you were not willing to be my equal when I lowered myself to your level, you shall be my inferior, which you are.

Bertha. And all this—all this noble revenge because *you* were *my* inferior!

Axel. Yes, I was your inferior, even when I painted your picture!

Bertha. Did you paint my picture? If you repeat that, I'll strike you.

Axel. Yes, your kind, who despise raw strength, are always the first to resort to it. Go ahead and strike.

Bertha. [*Advancing.*] Don't you think I can measure strength with you?

[AXEL *takes both her wrists in one hand.*]

Axel. No, I don't think so. Are you convinced now that I am also your physical superior? Bend, or I'll break you!

Bertha. Do you dare strike me?

Axel. Why not? I know of only one reason why I should not strike you.

Bertha. What's that?

Axel. Because you are morally irresponsible.

Bertha. [*Trying to free herself.*] Let go!

Axel. When you have begged for forgiveness! So, down on your knees. [*He forces her down with one hand.*] There, now look up to me, from below! That's your place, that you yourself have chosen.

Bertha. [*Giving in.*] Axel, Axel, I don't know you any more. Are you he who swore to love me, who begged to carry me, to lift me?

Axel. It is I. I was strong then, and believed I had the power to do it; but you sapped my strength while my tired head lay in your lap, you sucked my best blood while I slept—and still there was enough left to subdue you. But get up and let us end this declaiming. We have business to talk over! [BERTHA *rises, sits on couch and weeps.*] Why are you crying?

Bertha. I don't know! Because I'm weak, perhaps.

[BERTHA'S *attitude and actions are those of complete surrender.*]

Axel. You see—I was your strength. When I took what was mine, you had nothing left. You were a rubber ball that I blew up; when I let go of you, you fell together like an empty bag.

Bertha. [*Without looking up.*] I don't know whether you are right or not, but since we have quarreled, my strength has left me. Axel, will you believe me,—I have never experienced before what I now feel ——

Axel. So? What do you feel, then?

Bertha. I can't say it! I don't know whether it is—love, but ——

Axel. What do you mean by love? Isn't it a quiet longing to eat me alive once more? You begin to love me! Why didn't you do that before, when I was good to you? Goodness is stupidity, though; let us be evil! Isn't that right?

Bertha. Be a little evil, rather, but don't be weak. [*Rises.*] Axel, forgive me, but don't desert me. Love me! Oh, love me!

Axel. It is too late! Yesterday, this morning, I would have fallen before you as you stand there now, but it's too late now.

Bertha. Why is it too late now?

Axel. Because tonight I have broken all ties, even the last.

Bertha. [*Taking his hands.*] What do you mean?

Axel. I have been untrue to you.

Bertha. [*Falls in a heap.*] Oh!

Axel. It was the only way to tear myself loose.

Bertha. [*Collecting herself.*] Who was she?

Axel. A woman —— [*Pause.*]

Bertha. How did she look?

Axel. Like a woman! With long hair and high breasts, et cetera.— Spare yourself.

Bertha. Do you think I am jealous of one of that kind?

Axel. One of that kind, two of that kind, many of that kind!

Bertha. [*Gasping.*] And tomorrow our friends are invited here! Do you want to create a scandal and call in the invitations?

Axel. No, I don't want to be mean in my revenge. Tomorrow we'll have our friends, and the day after our ways will part.

Bertha. Yes, our ways must part now. Good night! [*Goes to door left.*]

Axel. [*Going to door right.*] Good night!

Bertha. [*Stops.*] Axel!

Axel. Yes?

Bertha. Oh, it wasn't anything!—Yes, wait. [*Goes toward* Axel *with clasped hands.*] Love me, Axel! Love me!

Axel. Would you share with another?

Bertha. [*Pause.*] If only you loved me!

Axel. No, I cannot. You can't draw me to you as you used to do.

Bertha. Love me, be merciful! I am honest now, I believe, otherwise I would never humiliate myself as—as I am doing now, before a man.

Axel. Even if I had compassion for you, I cannot call forth any love. It has come to an end. It is dead.

Bertha. I beg for a man's love, I, a woman, and he shoves me away from him!

Axel. Why not? *We* should also have leave to say no for once, although we are not always very hard to please.

Bertha. A woman offers herself to a man and is refused!

Axel. Feel now how millions have felt, when they have begged on their knees for the mercy of being allowed to give what the other accepts. Feel it for your whole sex, and then tell them how it felt.

Bertha. [*Rising.*] Good night. The day after tomorrow, then.

Axel. You still want the party tomorrow, then?

Bertha. Yes, I want the party tomorrow.

Axel. Good. The day after tomorrow, then.

[*They go out, each their own way right and left.*]

ACT FOUR

Same scene. But the glass doors leading to orchard are open. The sun is still shining outside and the studio is brightly lighted. The side doors are open. A serving table is seen out in the orchard; on it are glasses and bottles, et cetera. Axel *wears cutaway, but without the decoration, and is wearing a standing collar with four-in-hand scarf. His hair is brushed straight back.* Bertha *wears a dark gown, cut square, with frilled fichu. She has a flower on the left shoulder. The* Misses Hall *are extravagantly and expensively dressed.* Bertha *enters from orchard. She is pale and has dark shadows under her eyes.* Abel *enters from door at back. They embrace and kiss each other.*

Bertha. Good afternoon, and welcome.

Abel. Good afternoon.

Bertha. And Gaga promised to come?

Abel. Absolutely certain. He was in a regretful spirit and begged forgiveness. [Bertha *straightens out her fichu.*] But what is the matter with you today? Has anything happened?

Bertha. How so? What?

Abel. You are not like yourself. Have you—? Bertha! Have you ——

Bertha. Don't talk.

Abel. Your eyes are so full of color and brilliancy! What? Is it possible—? And so pale? Bertha!

Bertha. I must go out to my guests.

Abel. Tell me, are Carl and Östermark here?

Bertha. Both are out in the orchard.

Abel. And Mrs. Hall and the girls?

Bertha. Mrs. Hall will come later, but the girls are in my room.

Abel. I'm afraid that our scheme of revenge will fall as flat as a pancake.

Bertha. No, not this—not this one!

[Willmer *enters with a bouquet of flowers. He goes to* Bertha,

kisses her hand, and gives her the bouquet.]

Willmer. Forgive me! For my love's sake!

Bertha. No, not on that account, but—it doesn't matter. I don't know why, but today I don't want any enemies.

[Axel *comes in.* Bertha *and* Willmer *look distressed.*]

Axel. [*To* Bertha, *not noticing* Willmer.] Pardon—if I disturb——

Bertha. Not at all.

Axel. I only wanted to ask if you had ordered the supper?

Bertha. Yes, of course—as you wished.

Axel. Very well. I only wanted to know. [*Pause.*]

Abel. How festive you two look! [Bertha *and* Axel *are silent.* Willmer *breaks the embarrassment by starting for the orchard.*] Listen, Gaga—— [*She hastens out after* Willmer.]

Axel. What have you ordered for the supper?

Bertha. [*Looks at him and smiles.*] Lobsters and poulet.

Axel. [*Uncertain.*] What are you smiling at?

Bertha. My thoughts.

Axel. What are you thinking then?

Bertha. I am thinking—no, I really don't know—unless it was about the betrothal supper we had in the Gardens that spring evening when you had wooed——

Axel. You had wooed——

Bertha. Axel!—And now it is the last, last time. It was a short summer.

Axel. Quite short, but the sun will come again.

Bertha. Yes, for you who can find sunshine in every street.

Axel. What is there to hinder you from seeking warmth at the same fire?

Bertha. And so we shall meet again, perhaps—some evening by street light, you mean?

Axel. I didn't mean that—but *à la bonne heure!* That at least will be a free relation.

Bertha. Yes, very free, especially for you.

Axel. For you, too, but pleasanter for me.

Bertha. That's a noble thought.

Axel. Now, now—don't tear open the old wounds! We were talking about the supper. And we must not forget our guests. So! [*Goes toward his room right.*]

Bertha. About the supper—yes, of course! That's what we were talking about.

[*She flies toward her room left, stirred and agitated. They both go out. The scene is empty for a moment. Then the* Misses Hall *come in from the orchard.*]

Miss Amélie. How very dull it is here!

Miss Thérèse. Insufferably stupid, and our hosts are not altogether polite.

Miss Amélie. The hostess is especially unpleasant. And the short-hair kind, too.

Miss Thérèse. Yes, but I understand that a lieutenant is coming——

Miss Amélie. Well, that's good, for these artists are a lot of free traders. Hush, here is a diplomat surely.—He looks so distinguished.

[*They sit on couch.* Doctor Östermark *comes in from the orchard; he discovers the* Misses Hall *and looks at them through his pince-nez.*]

Dr. Östermark. I am honored, ladies. H'm, one meets so many of one's countrywomen here. Are you artists, too? You paint, I suppose?

Miss Amélie. No, we don't paint.

Dr. Östermark. Oh, but just a little, perhaps. Here in Paris all ladies paint—themselves.

Miss Thérèse. We don't have to.

Dr. Östermark. Oh, well, you play then?

Miss Amélie. Play?

Dr. Östermark. Oh, I don't mean playing at cards. But all ladies play a little.

Miss Amélie. Evidently you are just from the country.

Dr. Östermark. Yes, just from the country. Can I be of any slight service to you?

Miss Thérèse. Pardon, but we don't know with whom we have the honor——?

Dr. Östermark. You ladies have evidently just come from Stockholm. In this country we can talk to each other without asking for references.

Miss Amélie. We haven't asked for references.

Dr. Östermark. What do you ask, then? To have your curiosity satisfied? Well, I'm an old family physician and my name is Anderson. Perhaps I may know your names now?—Character not needed.

Miss Thérèse. We are the Misses Hall, if that can be of any interest to the doctor.

Dr. Östermark. Hall? H'm! I've surely heard that name before. Pardon, pardon me a question, a somewhat countrified question——

Miss Amélie. Don't be bashful!

Dr. Östermark. Is your father still living?

Miss Amélie. No, he is dead.

Dr. Östermark. Oh, yes. Well, now that I have gone so far, there is nothing to do but continue. Mr. Hall was——

Miss Thérèse. Our father was a director of the Fire Insurance Company of Göteborg.

Dr. Östermark. Oh, well, then I beg your pardon. Do you find Paris to your liking?

Miss Amélie. Very! Thérèse, do you remember what I did with my shawl? Such a cold draught here! [*Rises.*]

Miss Thérèse. You left it in the orchard, no doubt.

Dr. Östermark. [*Rising.*] No, don't go out. Allow me to find it for you—no—sit still—just sit still.

[*Goes out into orchard. After a moment* Mrs. Hall *comes in from left, quite comfortable with drink; her cheeks are flaming red and her voice is uncertain.*]

Miss Amélie. Look, there's mother! And in that condition again! Heavens, why does she come here? Why did you come here, mother?

Mrs. Hall. Keep quiet! I have as much right here as you.

Miss Thérèse. Why have you been drinking again? Think if someone should come!

Mrs. Hall. I haven't been drinking. What nonsense!

Miss Amélie. We will be ruined if the doctor should come back and see you. Come, let's go in here and you can get a glass of water.

Mrs. Hall. It's nice of you to treat your mother like this and say that she has been drinking, to say such a thing to your own mother!

Miss Thérèse. Don't talk, but go in, immediately.

[*They lead her in right.* Axel *and* Carl *come in from the orchard.*]

Carl. Well, you're looking fine, my dear Axel, and you have a manlier bearing than you used to have.

Axel. Yes, I have emancipated myself.

Carl. You should have done that at the start, as I did.

Axel. As you did?

Carl. As I did. Immediately I took my position as head of the family, to which place I found myself called both because of my superior mind and my natural abilities.

Axel. And how did your wife like that?

Carl. Do you know, I forgot to ask her! But to judge by appearances, I should say that she found things as they should be. They only need real men—and human beings can be made even out of women.

Axel. But at least the power should be divided?

Carl. Power cannot be divided! Either obey or command. Either you or I. I preferred myself to her, and she had to adjust herself to it.

Axel. Yes, but didn't she have money?

Carl. Not at all. She didn't bring more than a silver soup-spoon to our nest. But she demanded an accounting of it; and she got it. She was a woman of principle, you see!—— She is so good, so good, but so am I good to her. I think it's really great sport to be married, what? And besides, she's such a splendid cook!

[*The* Misses Hall *come in from right.*]

Axel. Let me introduce you to the Misses Hall, Lieutenant Starck.

Carl. I am very happy to make your [*gives them a look of recognition*] acquaintance.

[*The young ladies seem surprised and embarrassed; they nod and go out to the orchard somewhat excited.*]

Carl. How did they get in here?

Axel. What do you mean? They are friends of my wife's and this is the first time that they have been here. Do you know them?

Carl. Yes, somewhat!

Axel. What do you mean to imply?

Carl. H'm, I met them in St. Petersburg—late one night!

Axel. Late one night?

Carl. Yes.

Axel. Isn't there some mistake?

Carl. No-o! There is no mistake. They were very well known ladies in St. Petersburg.

Axel. And Bertha allows that kind in my house!

[BERTHA *comes rushing in from orchard.*]

Bertha. What does this mean? Have you insulted the young ladies?

Axel. No—but ——

Bertha. They came out of here crying and declared that they couldn't stay in the company of you gentlemen any longer! What has happened?

Axel. Do you know these young ladies?

Bertha. They are my friends! Isn't that enough?

Axel. Not quite enough.

Bertha. Not quite? Well, but if ——

[DR. ÖSTERMARK *comes in from the orchard.*]

Dr. Östermark. What does this mean? What have you done to the little girls who ran away? I offered to help them with their wraps, but they refused to be helped and had tears in their eyes.

Carl. [*To* BERTHA.] I must ask you, are they your friends?

Bertha. Yes, they are! But if my protection is not sufficient, then perhaps Doctor Östermark will take them under his wing, considering that he has a certain claim to them.

Carl. But a mistake has been made here. You mean that I, who have had certain relations with these girls, should appear as their cavalier?

Bertha. What sort of relations?

Carl. Chance, such as one has with such women!

Bertha. Such women? That's a lie!

Carl. I'm not in the habit of lying.

Dr. Östermark. But I don't understand what *I* have got to do with these young ladies.

Bertha. *You* would prefer to have nothing to do with your deserted children.

Dr. Östermark. My children! But I don't understand.

Bertha. They are your two daughters—daughters of your divorced wife.

Dr. Östermark. Since you consider that you have the right to be personal and make my affairs the subject of public discussion, I will answer you publicly. You seem to have taken the trouble to find out that I am not a widower. Good! My marriage, which was childless, was dissolved twenty years ago. Since then I have entered into another relation, and we have a child that is just five years old. These grown girls, therefore, cannot be my children. Now you know the whole matter.

Bertha. But your wife—whom you threw out upon the world ——

Dr. Östermark. No, that wasn't the case either. She walked out, or staggered, if you prefer it, and then she received half my income until at last I found out that—enough said. If you could conceive what it cost me of work and self-denial to support two establishments, you would have spared me this unpleasant moment, but your kind wouldn't consider anything like that. You needn't know any more, as it really doesn't concern you.

Bertha. But it would amuse me to know why your first wife left you.

Dr. Östermark. I don't think it would amuse you to know that she was ugly, narrow, paltry, and that I was too good for her! Think now, you tender-hearted, sensitive Bertha, think if they really had been my daughters, these friends of yours and Carl's; imagine how my old heart would have been gladdened to see, after eighteen years, these children that I had borne in my arms during the long night of illness. And imagine if she, my first love, my wife, with whom life the first time became life, had accepted your invitation and come here? What a fifth act in the melodrama you wished to offer us, what a noble revenge on one who is guiltless! Thanks, old friend. Thank you for your reward for the friendship I have shown you.

Bertha. Reward! Yes, I know that I owe you—a fee. [AXEL, CARL *and the* DOCTOR *make protestations of* "Oh," "Now," "Really," *et cetera.*] I know that, I know it very well.

[AXEL, CARL *and* DOCTOR *say* "No," "Fie," "This is going too far."]

Dr. Östermark. No, but I'm going to get out of here. Horrors! Yes, you are the right sort! Pardon me, Axel, but I can't help it!

Bertha. [*To* AXEL.] You're a fine man, to allow your wife to be insulted!

Axel. I can understand neither your allowing yourself to insult, or to be insulted! [*Music is heard from the orchard; guitar and an Italian song.*] The singers have arrived; perhaps you would all like to step

out and have a bit of harmony on top of all this.

[*They all go out except the* Doctor, *who goes over to look at some drawings on wall right near door to* Axel's *room. The music outside is played softly.* Mrs. Hall *comes in and walks unsteadily across the scene and sits in a chair. The* Doctor, *who does not recognize her, bows deeply.*]

Mrs. Hall. What music is that out there?

Dr. Östermark. They are some Italians, dear lady.

Mrs. Hall. Yes? No doubt the ones I heard at Monte Carlo.

Dr. Östermark. Oh, perhaps there are other Italians.

Mrs. Hall. Well, I believe it's none other than Östermark! No one could be as quick as he in his retorts.

Dr. Östermark. [*Stares at her.*] Ah—think—there are things—that—are less dreadful than dread! It is you, Carolina! And this is the moment that for eighteen years I have been running away from, dreamed about, sought, feared, wished for; wished for that I might receive the shock and afterward have nothing to dread! [*He takes out a vial and wets his upper lip with a few drops.*] Don't be afraid; it's not poison, in such little doses. It's for the heart, you see.

Mrs. Hall. Ugh, your heart! Yes, you have so much!

Dr. Östermark. It's strange that two people cannot meet once every eighteen years without quarreling.

Mrs. Hall. It was always you who quarreled!

Dr. Östermark. Alone? What!—Shall we stop now?—I must try to look at you. [*He takes a chair and sits down opposite* Mrs. Hall.] Without trembling!

Mrs. Hall. I've become old!

Dr. Östermark. That's what happens; one has read about it, seen it, felt it one's self, but nevertheless it is horrifying. I am old, too.

Mrs. Hall. Are you happy in your new life?

Dr. Östermark. To tell the truth, it's one and the same thing; different, but quite the same.

Mrs. Hall. Perhaps the old life was better, then?

Dr. Östermark. No, it wasn't better, as it was about the same, but it's a question if it wouldn't have seemed better now, just because it was the old life. One doesn't blossom but once, and then one goes to seed; what comes afterward is only a little aftermath. And you, how are you getting along?

Mrs. Hall. [*Offended.*] What do you mean?

Dr. Östermark. Don't misunderstand me. Are you contented with—your—lot? I mean—oh, that it should be so difficult to make one's self understood by women!

Mrs. Hall. Contented? H'm!

Dr. Östermark. Well, you were never contented. But when one is young, one always demands the first class, and then one gets the third class when one is old. Now, I understand that you told Mrs. Alberg here that your girls are my children!

Mrs. Hall. I did? That is a lie.

Dr. Östermark. Still untruthful, eh? In the old days, when I was foolish, I looked upon lying as a vice; but now I know it to be a natural defect. You actually believe in your lies, and that is dangerous. But never mind about that now. Are you leaving, or do you wish me to leave?

Mrs. Hall. [*Rising.*] I will go.

[*She falls back into the chair and gropes about.*]

Dr. Östermark. What, drunk too?—I really pity you. Oh, this is most unpleasant! Dear me, I believe I'm ready to cry! —Carolina! No, I can't bear this!

Mrs. Hall. I am ill.

Dr. Östermark. Yes, that's what happens when one drinks too much. But this is more bitter than I ever thought it could be. I have killed little unborn children to be able to save the mother, and I have felt them tremble in their fight against death. I have cut living muscles, and have seen the marrow flow like butter from healthy bones, but never has anything hurt me so much as this since the day you left me. Then it was as if you had gone away with one of my lungs, so I could only gasp with the other!—Oh, I feel as if I were suffocating now!

Mrs. Hall. Help me out of here. It's too

noisy. I don't know why we came here, anyway. Give me your hand.

Dr. Östermark. [*Leading her to door.*] Before it was I who asked for your hand; and it rested so heavily on me, the little delicate hand! Once it struck my face, the little delicate hand, but I kissed it nevertheless.—Oh, now it is withered, and will never strike again.—Ah, dolce Napoli! Joy of life, what became of it? You who were the bride of my youth!

Mrs. Hall. [*In the hall door.*] Where is my wrap?

Dr. Östermark. [*Closing door.*] In the hall, probably. This is horrible! [*Lights a cigar.*] Oh, dolce Napoli! I wonder if it is as delightful as it's said to be in that cholera-breeding fishing harbor. *Blague,* no doubt! *Blague! Blague!* Naples—bridal couples, love, joy of life, antiquities, modernity, liberalism, conservatism, idealism, realism, naturalism,—*blague, blague,* the whole thing!

[AXEL, ABEL, WILLMER, MRS. STARCK *and* BERTHA *come in from orchard.*]

Mrs. Starck. What is happening to the doctor?

Dr. Östermark. Pardon, it was only a little *qui pro quo.* Two strangers sneaked in here and we had to identify them.

Mrs. Starck. The girls?

Carl. Well, that has nothing to do with you. I don't know why, but I seem to feel "the enemy in the air."

Mrs. Starck. Ah, you're always seeing the enemy, you dear Carl.

Carl. No, I don't see them, but I feel them.

Mrs. Starck. Well, come to your friend, then, and she will defend you.

Carl. Oh, you're always so good to me.

Mrs. Starck. Why shouldn't I be, when you are so good to me?

[*The door at back is opened and the* MAID *and two men come in carrying a picture.*]

Axel. What's this?

Maid. The porter said that it must be carried into the studio, as he didn't have any room for it.

Axel. What foolishness is this? Take it out.

Maid. The mistress sent for the picture herself.

Bertha. That's not true. For that matter, it's not my picture, anyway. It's your master's. Put it down there. [*The* MAID *and the man go out.*] Perhaps it isn't yours, Axel? Let's see. [AXEL *places himself in front of picture.*] Move a little so we can see.

Axel. [*Gives way.*] It's a mistake.

Bertha. [*Shrieks.*] What! What is this! It's a mistake! What does it mean? It's my picture, but it's Axel's number! Oh!

[*She falls in a faint. The* DOCTOR *and* CARL *carry her into her room left, the women follow.*]

Abel. She is dying!

Mrs. Starck. Heaven help us, what is this! The poor little dear! Doctor Östermark, do something, say something—and Axel stands there crestfallen.

[AXEL *and* WILLMER *are alone.*]

Axel. This is your doing.

Willmer. My doing?

[AXEL *takes him by the ear.*]

Axel. Yes, yours, but not altogether. But I am going to give you your share. [*He leads him to the door, which he opens with one foot, and kicks out* WILLMER *with the other.*] Out with you!

Willmer. I'll get even for this!

Axel. I shall be waiting for it!

[DOCTOR *and* CARL *come in.*]

Dr. Östermark. What's the trouble with the picture, anyway?

Axel. Nothing—only that it seemed to represent sulphuric acid.

Carl. Now tell us, are you refused, or is she?

Axel. I am refused on her picture. I wanted to help her a bit, as a good comrade, and that's why I changed the numbers.

Dr. Östermark. Yes, but there is something else too. She says that you don't love her any more.

Axel. She is right in that. That's how it is, and tomorrow we part.

Dr. Östermark and *Carl.* Part?

Axel. Yes, when there are no ties to bind things, they loosen of themselves. This wasn't a marriage; it was only living together, or something even worse.

Dr. Östermark. There is bad air here. Come, let's go.

Axel. Yes, I want to get out—out of here.

[*They start for the door.* ABEL *comes in.*]

Abel. What, are you leaving?

Axel. Does that astonish you?

Abel. Let me have a word with you.

Axel. Go on.

Abel. Don't you want to go in and see Bertha?

Axel. No!

Abel. What have you done to her?

Axel. I have bent her.

Abel. I noticed that—she is black and blue around the wrists! Look at me! I didn't think that of you. Well, conqueror, triumph now!

Axel. It's an uncertain conquest, and I don't even wish for it.

Abel. Are you sure of that? [*She leans over to* AXEL, *in low voice.*] Bertha loves you now—now that you have bent her.

Axel. I know it. But I don't love her any longer.

Abel. Won't you go in and see her?

Axel. No, it's all over. [*Takes* DOCTOR'S *arms.*] Come!

Abel. May I take a message to Bertha?

Axel. No! Yes! Tell her, that I despise and abhor her.

Abel. Good-bye, my friend.

Axel. Good-bye, my enemy.

Abel. Enemy?

Axel. Are you my friend?

Abel. I don't know. Both and neither. I am a bastard——

Axel. We are all that, as we are crocheted out of man and woman! Perhaps you have loved me in your way, as you wanted to separate Bertha and me.

Abel. [*Rolling a cigarette.*] Loved! I wonder how it seems to love? No, I cannot love; I must be deformed—for it made me happy to see you two until the envy of deformity set me on fire. Perhaps you love me?

Axel. No, on my honor! You have been an agreeable comrade who happened to be dressed like a woman; you have never impressed me as belonging to another sex; and love, you see, can and should exist only between individuals of opposite sexes——

Abel. Sex love, yes!

Axel. Is there any other, then?

Abel. I don't know! But I am to be pitied. And this hate, this terrible hate! Perhaps that would disappear if you men were not so afraid to love us, if you were not so—how shall I express it—so moral, as it's called.

Axel. But in heaven's name, be a little more lovable, then, and don't get yourselves up so that one is forced to think of the penal law whenever one looks at you.

Abel. Do you think I'm such a fright, then?

Axel. Well, you know, you must pardon me, but you are awful.

[BERTHA *comes in.*]

Bertha. [*To* AXEL.] Are you going?

Axel. Yes, I was just about to go, but now I'll stay.

Bertha. [*Softly.*] What? You——

Axel. I shall stay in *my* home.

Bertha. In *our*—home.

Axel. No, in *mine.* In my studio with my furniture.

Bertha. And I?

Axel. You may do what you please, but you must know what you risk. You see in my suit I have applied for one year's separation in bed and board. Should you stay, that is to say, if you should seek me during this time, you would have to choose between imprisonment, or being considered my mistress. Do you feel like staying?

Bertha. Oh, is that the law?

Axel. That's the law.

Bertha. You drive me out, then?

Axel. No, but the law does.

Bertha. And you think I'll be satisfied with that?

Axel. No, I don't, for you won't be satisfied until you have taken all the life out of me.

Bertha. Axel! How you talk! If you knew how I—love you!

Axel. That doesn't sound irrational, but I don't love you.

Bertha. [*Flaring up and pointing to* ABEL.] Because you love her!

Axel. No, indeed, I don't. Have never loved her, and never will. What incredible imagining! As if there were not other women and more fascinating than you two!

Bertha. But Abel loves you!

Axel. That is possible. I even believe that she suggested something of the kind. Yes, she said so distinctly; let's see, how was it——

Bertha. [*Changing.*] You are really the most shameless creature I have ever met!

Axel. Yes, I can well believe that.

Bertha. [*Puts on her hat and wrap.*] Now you expect to put me out on the street? That is final?

Axel. On the street, or where you please.

Bertha. [*Angry.*] Do you think a woman will allow herself to be treated like this?

Axel. Once you asked me to forget that you were a woman. Very well, I have forgotten it.

Bertha. But do you know that you have liabilities to the one who has been your wife?

Axel. You mean the pay for good comradeship? What? A life annuity!

Bertha. Yes.

Axel. [*Putting a few bills on the table.*] Here is a month in advance.

Bertha. [*Takes money and counts it.*] You still have a little honor left!

Abel. Good-bye, Bertha. Now I am off.

Bertha. Wait and you can go along with me.

Abel. No, I won't go any further with you.

Bertha. What? Why not?

Abel. I am ashamed to.

Bertha. [*Astonished.*] Ashamed?

Abel. Yes, ashamed. Good-bye. [*Goes out.*]

Bertha. I don't understand. Good-bye, Axel! Thanks for the money. Are we friends? [*Taking his hand.*]

Axel. I am not, at least.—Let go of my hand, or I will believe that you wish to seduce me again.

[BERTHA *goes toward door.*]

Axel. [*With a sigh of relief.*] Pleasant comrades! Oh!

[*The* MAID *enters from the orchard.*]

Maid. [*To* AXEL.] There is a lady waiting for you.

Axel. I'll soon be free.

Bertha. Is that the new comrade?

Axel. No, not comrade, but sweetheart.

Bertha. And your wife to be?

Axel. Perhaps. Because I want to meet my comrades at the café, but at home I want a wife. [*Starts as if to go.*] Pardon me!

Bertha. Farewell, then! Are we never to meet again?

Axel. Yes, of course! But at the café. Good-bye!

THE END

THE CHERRY ORCHARD

(VISCHEVEE SAD)

By ANTON TCHEKHOV

Translated from the Russian by GEORGE CALDERON

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ANTON TCHEKHOV AND HIS PLAYS

Anton Tchekhov, the author of *The Cherry Orchard,* was born in 1860 in Taganrog, in the south of Russia, studied at the University of Moscow, and in 1884 gained the degree of M.D. Early in his career he turned to writing, and gained fame as the greatest master of the short-story that Russia has produced. In 1885 he began to write plays, with varying success. After the failure of his *Sea Gull* in St. Petersburg, the Moscow Art Theatre took over the play and presented it successfully, and then began Tchekhov's association with that famous organization. The two became so intimately connected that it is commonly supposed that each "made" the other. The truth is that, although the Moscow Art Theatre made the first productions of Tchekhov's *Three Sisters* and *The Cherry Orchard,* both the dramatist and the theatre were celebrated and well-established before they came together at all. Toward the close of his life Tchekhov became an actual shareholder in the company, and married Olga Kneipper, one of the actresses. Tchekhov suffered from tuberculosis, and spent his last years in the mild climate of the Crimea, where he died in 1904.

Tchekhov wrote altogether fourteen plays, nine of which are of one act only. Of his five long plays the indubitable masterpieces are *The Three Sisters, The Sea Gull,* and *The Cherry Orchard.* In technique he is primarily a naturalist, but he informs his naturalism with a delicate and unobtrusive symbolism. With Tchekhov the symbol is not an external ornament, deliberately applied from the outside, but an essential ingredient, a natural growth out of action, character, and environment. It is completely fused with these other elements, yet it dominates and transcends them. It is at the same time both an interpretation of the fact and the fact itself. Like Schnitzler, also a physician, Tchekhov carries into his plays something of the psychological insight acquired in his practice; to this fact he himself testifies. And, again like Schnitzler, he shows a tolerant sympathy for all kinds of men and all their vagaries. He seems less interested in isolated individuals than in individuals closely associated in a group. This group is composed, not of the proletariat, as is usual in the naturalistic plays of Hauptmann, but of the *bourgeoisie* or of the gentry of the country or the towns. And the group, however composed, becomes, by some astonishing skill, possessed of such organic unity that the whole seems like a many-sided individual.

At first Tchekhov's plays look almost formless and incoherent; but actually they are of a strong fabric, closely and artfully woven, with every effect carefully planned, and with every line of the apparently artless speech contributing to the total impression. Here is, indeed, the art that conceals art and surpasses art—"the art itself is nature." The final result is a sense of reality attained in like measure by scarcely another modern dramatist.

The Cherry Orchard is characteristic of Tchekhov's work in general. It pictures a complete group, this time composed of persons of various types and social ranks, every member of which is as carefully characterized as if he were the sole protagonist of the play, and all disposed in the picture according to the way and the degree in which he expresses the dominant idea. Simply as an illustration of the relation of social classes in Russia the play is undoubtedly out of date; it relies for its appeal upon its humanity. Peculiarly Russian, its persons are so free from inhibitions, so naïve, as often to seem incredibly childlike to western eyes; but those of their traits that seem distinctively national are so utterly merged in universal qualities that they become generally comprehensible.

The Cherry Orchard was written in 1904 and in that same year was presented by the Moscow Art Theatre. Its first performance in English was in 1911, in London, by the Stage Society. The Moscow Art Theatre included it in their repertory on their first American tour, which opened in New York in December, 1923. Since then it has been repeatedly performed in English in the United States.

CHARACTERS

Madame Ranévsky, *a landowner*
Ánya, *her daughter, aged seventeen*
Barbara, *her adopted daughter, aged twenty-seven*
Leoníd Gáyef, *brother of Madame Ranévsky*
Lopákhin, *a merchant*
Peter Trophímof, *a student*
Simeónof-Píshtchik, *a landowner*
Charlotte, *a governess*
Ephikhódof, *a clerk*
Dunyásha, *a housemaid*
Firs, *man-servant, aged eighty-seven*
Yásha, *a young man-servant*
Tramp
Stationmaster, Post-Office Official, Guests, Servants, etc.

The action takes place on Madame Ranévsky's estate in Russia about the year 1900.

THE CHERRY ORCHARD

ACT ONE

A room which is still called the nursery. One door leads to Ánya's *room. Dawn; the sun will soon rise. It is already May; the cherry trees are in blossom, but it is cold in the garden and there is a morning frost. The windows are closed.*

Enter Dunyásha *with a candle, and* Lopákhin *with a book in his hand.*

Lopákhin. So the train has come in, thank Heaven. What is the time?

Dunyásha. Nearly two. [*Putting the candle out.*] It is light already.

Lopákhin. How late is the train? A couple of hours at least. [*Yawning and stretching.*] What do you think of me? A fine fool I have made of myself. I came on purpose to meet them at the station and then I went and fell asleep, fell asleep as I sat in my chair. What a nuisance it is! You might have woke me up anyway.

Dunyásha. I thought that you had gone. [*She listens.*] That sounds like them driving up.

Lopákhin [*listening*]. No; they have got to get the luggage out and all that. [*A pause.*] Madame Ranévsky has been five years abroad. I wonder what she has become like. What a splendid creature she is! So easy and simple in her ways. I remember when I was a youngster of fifteen my old father (he used to keep the shop here in the village then) struck me in the face with his fist and set my nose bleeding. We had come, for some reason or other, I forget what, into the courtyard, and he had been drinking. Madame Ranévsky—I remember it like yesterday, still a young girl, and oh, so slender—brought me to the washhand stand, here, in this very room, in the nursery. "Don't cry, little peasant," she said, "it'll mend by your wedding."[1] [*A pause.*] "Little peasant"! . . . My father, it is true, was a peasant, and here am I in a white waistcoat and brown boots; a silk purse out of a sow's ear, as you might say; just turned rich, with heaps of money, but when you come to look at it, still a peasant of the peasants. [*Turning over the pages of the book.*] Here's this book that I was reading and didn't understand a word of it; I just sat reading and fell asleep.

Dunyásha. The dogs never slept all night; they knew that their master and mistress were coming.

Lopákhin. What's the matter with you, Dunyásha? You're all . . .

Dunyásha. My hands are trembling; I feel quite faint.

Lopákhin. You are too refined, Dunyásha; that's what it is. You dress yourself like a young lady; and look at your hair! You ought not to do it; you ought to remember your place.

[*Enter* Ephikhódof *with a nosegay. He is dressed in a short jacket and brightly polished boots which squeak noisily. As he comes in he drops the nosegay.*]

Ephikhódof [*picking it up*]. The gardener has sent this; he says it is to go in the dining-room. [*Handing it to* Dunyásha.]

Lopákhin. And bring me some quass.

Dunyásha. Yes, sir. [*Exit* Dunyásha.]

Ephikhódof. There's a frost this morning, three degrees, and the cherry trees all in blossom. I can't say I think much of our climate; [*sighing*] that is impossible. Our climate is not adapted to contribute; and I should like to add, with your permission, that only two days ago I bought myself a new pair of boots, and I venture to assure you they do squeak beyond all bearing. What am I to grease them with?

Lopákhin. Get out; I'm tired of you.

Ephikhódof. Every day some misfortune happens to me; but do I grumble? No; I am used to it; I can afford to smile.

[*Enter* Dunyásha, *and hands a glass of quass to* Lopákhin.]

Ephikhódof. I must be going. [*He knocks against a chair, which falls to the ground.*] There you are! [*In a voice of triumph.*] You see, if I may venture on the expression, the

[1] *It'll mend by your wedding:* a proverbial phrase.

sort of incidents *inter alia*. It really is astonishing. [*Exit* EPHIKHÓDOF.]

Dunyásha. To tell you the truth, Yermolái Alexéyitch, Ephikhódof has made me a proposal.

Lopákhin. Hmph!

Dunyásha. I hardly know what to do. He is such a well-behaved young man, only so often when he talks one doesn't know what he means. It is all so nice and full of good feeling, but you can't make out what it means. I fancy I am rather fond of him. He adores me passionately. He is a most unfortunate man; every day something seems to happen to him. They call him "Twenty-two misfortunes," that's his nickname.

Lopákhin [*listening*]. There, surely that is them coming!

Dunyásha. They're coming! Oh, what is the matter with me? I am all turning cold.

Lopákhin. Yes, there they are, and no mistake. Let's go and meet them. Will she know me again, I wonder? It is five years since we met.

Dunyásha. I am going to faint! . . . I am going to faint!

[*Two carriages are heard driving up to the house.* LOPÁKHIN *and* DUNYÁSHA *exeunt quickly. The stage remains empty. A hubbub begins in the neighboring rooms.* FIRS *walks hastily across the stage, leaning on a walking-stick. He has been to meet them at the station. He is wearing an old-fashioned livery and a tall hat; he mumbles something to himself, but not a word is audible. The noise behind the scenes grows louder and louder. A voice says: "Let's go this way." Enter* MADAME RANÉVSKY, ÁNYA, CHARLOTTE, *leading a little dog on a chain, all dressed in traveling-dresses; Barbara in great-coat, with a kerchief over her head,* GÁYEF, SIMEÓNOF-PÍSHTCHIK, LOPÁKHIN, DUNYÁSHA, *carrying parcel and umbrella, servants with luggage, all cross the stage.*]

Ánya. Come through this way. Do you remember what room this is, mamma?

Madame Ranévsky [*joyfully, through her tears*]. The nursery.

Barbara. How cold it is. My hands are simply frozen. [*To* MADAME RANÉVSKY.] Your two rooms, the white room and the violet room, are just the same as they were, mamma.

Madame Ranévsky. My nursery, my dear, beautiful nursery! This is where I used to sleep when I was a little girl. [*Crying.*] I am like a little girl still. [*Kissing* GÁYEF *and* BARBARA *and then* GÁYEF *again.*] Barbara has not altered a bit; she is just like a nun; and I knew Dunyásha at once. [*Kissing* DUNYÁSHA.]

Gáyef. Your train was two hours late. What do you think of that? There's punctuality for you!

Charlotte [*to* SIMEÓNOF-PÍSHTCHIK]. My little dog eats nuts.

Pishtchik [*astonished*]. You don't say so! Well, I never!

[*Exeunt all but* ÁNYA *and* DUNYÁSHA.]

Dunyásha. At last you've come! [*She takes off* ÁNYA'S *overcoat and hat.*]

Ánya. I have not slept for four nights on the journey. I am frozen to death.

Dunyásha. It was Lent when you went away. There was snow on the ground; it was freezing; but now! Oh, my dear! [*Laughing and kissing her.*] How I have waited for you, my joy, my light! Oh, I must tell you something at once, I cannot wait another minute.

Ánya [*without interest*]. What, again?

Dunyásha. Ephikhódof, the clerk, proposed to me in Easter Week.

Ánya. Same old story. . . . [*Putting her hair straight.*] All my hairpins have dropped out.

[*She is very tired, staggering with fatigue.*]

Dunyásha. I hardly know what to think of it. He loves me! Oh, how he loves me!

Ánya [*looking into her bedroom, affectionately*]. My room, my windows, just as if I had never gone away! I am at home again! When I wake up in the morning I shall run out into the garden. . . . Oh, if only I could get to sleep! I have not slept the whole journey from Paris, I was so nervous and anxious.

Dunyásha. Monsieur Trophimof arrived the day before yesterday.

Ánya [*joyfully*]. Peter?

Dunyásha. He is sleeping outside in the bath-house; he is living there. He was afraid he might be in the way. [*Looking at her watch.*] I'd like to go and wake him, only Mamzelle Barbara told me not to. "Mind you don't wake him," she said.

[*Enter* BARBARA *with bunch of keys hanging from her girdle.*]

Barbara. Dunyásha, go and get some coffee, quick. Mamma wants some coffee.

Dunyásha. In a minute! [*Exit* DUNYÁSHA.]

Barbara. Well, thank Heaven, you have come. Here you are at home again. [*Caressing her.*] My little darling is back! My pretty one is back!

Ánya. What I've had to go through!

Barbara. I can believe you.

Ánya. I left here in Holy Week. How cold it was! Charlotte would talk the whole way and keep doing conjuring tricks. What on earth made you tie Charlotte round my neck?

Barbara. Well, you couldn't travel alone, my pet. At seventeen!

Ánya. When we got to Paris, it was so cold! There was snow on the ground. I can't talk French a bit. Mamma was on the fifth floor of a big house. When I arrived there were a lot of Frenchmen with her, and ladies, and an old Catholic priest with a book, and it was very uncomfortable and full of tobacco smoke. I suddenly felt so sorry for mamma, oh, so sorry! I took her head in my arms and squeezed it and could not let it go, and then mamma kept kissing me and crying.

Barbara [*crying*]. Don't go on; don't go on!

Ánya. She's sold her villa near Mentone already. She's nothing left, absolutely nothing; and I hadn't a farthing either. We only just managed to get home. And mamma won't understand! We get out at a station to have some dinner, and she asks for all the most expensive things and gives the waiters a florin each for a tip; and Charlotte does the same. And Yásha wanted his portion, too. It was too awful! Yásha is mamma's new manservant. We have brought him back with us.

Barbara. I've seen the rascal.

Ánya. Come, tell me all about everything! Has the interest on the mortgage been paid?

Barbara. How could it be?

Ánya. Oh, dear! Oh, dear!

Barbara. The property will be sold in August.

Ánya. Oh, dear! Oh, dear!

Lopákhin [*looking in at the door and mooing like a cow*]. Moo-oo! [*He goes away again.*]

Barbara [*laughing through her tears, and shaking her fist at the door*]. Oh, I should like to give him one!

Ánya [*embracing* BARBARA *softly*]. Barbara, has he proposed to you?

[BARBARA *shakes her head.*]

Ánya. And yet I am sure he loves you. Why don't you come to an understanding? What are you waiting for?

Barbara. I don't think anything will come of it. He has so much to do; he can't be bothered with me; he hardly takes any notice. Confound the man, I can't bear to see him! Every one talks about our marriage; every one congratulates me; but, as a matter of fact, there is nothing in it; it's all a dream. [*Changing her tone.*] You've got on a brooch like a bee.

Ánya [*sadly*]. Mamma bought it for me. [*Going into her room, talking gayly, like a child.*] When I was in Paris, I went up in a balloon!

Barbara. How glad I am you are back, my little pet! my pretty one!

[DUNYÁSHA *has already returned with a coffee-pot and begins to prepare the coffee.*]

Barbara [*standing by the door*]. I trudge about all day looking after things, and I think and think. What are we to do? If only we could marry you to some rich man it would be a load off my mind. I would go into a retreat, and then to Kief, to Moscow; I would tramp about from one holy place to another, always tramping and tramping. What bliss!

Ánya. The birds are singing in the garden. What time is it now?

Barbara. It must be past two. It is time to go to bed, my darling. [*Following* ÁNYA *into her room.*] What bliss!

[*Enter* YÁSHA *with a shawl and a traveling-bag.*]

Yásha [*crossing the stage, delicately*]. May I pass this way, mademoiselle?

Dunyásha. One would hardly know you, Yásha. How you've changed abroad!

Yásha. Ahem! And who may you be?

Dunyásha. When you left here I was a little thing like that [*indicating with her hand*]. My name is Dunyásha, Theodore Kozoyédof's daughter. Don't you remember me?

Yásha. Ahem! You little cucumber!

[*He looks round cautiously, then embraces her. She screams and drops a saucer. Exit* YÁSHA *hastily.*]

Barbara [*in the doorway, crossly*]. What's all this?

Dunyásha [*crying*]. I've broken a saucer.

Barbara. Well, it brings luck.

[*Enter* ÁNYA *from her room.*]

Ánya. We must tell mamma that Peter's here.

Barbara. I've told them not to wake him.

Ánya [*thoughtfully*]. It's just six years since papa died. And only a month afterwards poor little Grisha was drowned in the river; my pretty little brother, only seven years old! It was too much for mamma; she ran away, ran away without looking back. [*Shuddering.*] How well I can understand her, if only she knew! [*A pause.*] Peter Trophímof was Grisha's tutor; he might remind her.

[*Enter* Firs *in long coat and white waistcoat.*]

Firs [*going over to the coffee-pot, anxiously*]. My mistress is going to take coffee here. [*Putting on white gloves.*] Is the coffee ready? [*Sternly, to* Dunyásha.] Here, girl, where's the cream?

Dunyásha. Oh, dear! oh, dear! [*Exit* Dunyásha *hastily.*]

Firs [*bustling about the coffee-pot*]. Ah, you . . . job-lot![1] [*Mumbling to himself.*] She's come back from Paris. The master went to Paris once in a post-chaise. [*Laughing.*]

Barbara. What is it, Firs?

Firs. I beg your pardon? [*Joyfully.*] My mistress has come home; at last I've seen her. Now I'm ready to die.

[*He cries with joy. Enter* Madame Ranévsky, Lopákhin, Gáyef, *and* Píshtchik; Píshtchik *in Russian breeches and coat of fine cloth.* Gáyef *as he enters makes gestures as if playing billiards.*]

Madame Ranévsky. What was the expression? Let me see. "I'll put the red in the corner pocket; double into the middle—"

Gáyef. I'll chip the red in the right-hand top. Once upon a time, Lyuba, when we were children, we used to sleep here side by side in two little cots, and now I'm fifty-one, and can't bring myself to believe it.

Lopákhin. Yes; time flies.

Gáyef. Who's that?

Lopákhin. Time flies, I say.

Gáyef. There's a smell of patchouli!

Ánya. I am going to bed. Good-night, mamma. [*Kissing her mother.*]

Madame Ranévsky. My beloved little girl! [*Kissing her hands.*] Are you glad you're home again? I can't come to my right senses.

Ánya. Good-night, uncle.

Gáyef [*kissing her face and hands*]. God bless you, little Ánya. How like your mother you are! [*To* Madame Ranévsky.] You were just such another girl at her age, Lyuba.

[Ánya *shakes hands with* Lopákhin *and* Simeónof-Píshtchik, *and exit, shutting her bedroom door behind her.*]

Madame Ranévsky. She's very, very tired.

Píshtchik. It must have been a long journey.

Barbara. [*To* Lopákhin *and* Píshtchik.] Well, gentlemen, it's past two; time you were off.

Madame Ranévsky [*laughing*]. You haven't changed a bit, Barbara! [*Drawing her to herself and kissing her.*] I'll just finish my coffee, then we'll all go. [Firs *puts a footstool under her feet.*] Thank you, friend. I'm used to my coffee. I drink it day and night. Thank you, you dear old man. [*Kissing* Firs.]

Barbara. I'll go and see if they've got all the luggage. [*Exit* Barbara.]

Madame Ranévsky. Can it be me that's sitting here? [*Laughing.*] I want to jump and wave my arms about. [*Pausing and covering her face.*] Surely I must be dreaming! God knows I love my country. I love it tenderly. I couldn't see out of the window from the train, I was crying so. [*Crying.*] However, I must drink my coffee. Thank you, Firs; thank you, you dear old man. I'm so glad to find you still alive.

Firs. The day before yesterday.

Gáyef. He's hard of hearing.

Lopákhin. I've got to be off for Kharkof by the five-o'clock train. Such a nuisance! I wanted to stay and look at you and talk to you. You're as splendid as you always were.

Píshtchik [*sighing heavily*]. Handsomer than ever and dressed like a Parisian . . . Perish my wagon and all its wheels!

Lopákhin. Your brother, Leoníd Andréyitch, says I'm a snob, a money-grubber. He can say what he likes. I don't care a hang. Only I want you to believe in me as you used to; I want your wonderful, touching eyes to look at me as they used to. Merciful God in heaven! My father was your father's serf, and your grandfather's serf before him; but you, you did so much for me in the old days that I've forgotten everything, and I love you like a sister—more than a sister.

Madame Ranévsky. I can't sit still! I can't do it! [*Jumping up and walking about in great agitation.*] This happiness is more than I can bear. Laugh at me! I am a fool! [*Kissing a*

[1] *Job-lot.* In the original, *nedotëpa*, a word invented by Tchekhov, and now established as classical. Derived from *ne*, not, and *dotyápat*, to finish chopping.

cupboard.] My darling old cupboard! [*Caressing a table.*] My dear little table!

Gáyef. Nurse is dead since you went away.

Madame Ranévsky [*sitting down and drinking coffee*]. Yes, Heaven rest her soul. They wrote and told me.

Gáyef. And Anastási is dead. Squint-eyed Peter has left us and works in the town at the Police Inspector's now.

[GÁYEF *takes out a box of sugar candy from his pocket, and begins to eat it.*]

Pishtchik. My daughter Dáshenka sent her compliments.

Lopákhin. I long to say something charming and delightful to you. [*Looking at his watch.*] I'm just off; there's no time to talk. Well, yes, I'll put it in two or three words. You know that your cherry orchard is going to be sold to pay the mortgage: the sale is fixed for the 22d of August; but don't you be uneasy, my dear lady; sleep peacefully; there's a way out of it. This is my plan. Listen to me carefully. Your property is only fifteen miles from the town; the railway runs close beside it; and if only you will cut up the cherry orchard and the land along the river into building lots and let it off on lease for villas, you will get at least two thousand five hundred pounds a year out of it.

Gáyef. Come, Come! What rubbish you're talking!

Madame Ranévsky. I don't quite understand what you mean, Yermolái Alexéyitch.

Lopákhin. You will get a pound a year at least for every acre from the tenants, and if you advertise the thing at once, I am ready to bet whatever you like, by the autumn you won't have a clod of that earth left on your hands. It'll all be snapped up. In two words, I congratulate you; you are saved. It's a first-class site, with a good deep river. Only, of course you will have to put it in order and clear the ground; you will have to pull down all the old buildings—this house, for instance, which is no longer fit for anything; you'll have to cut down the cherry orchard. . . .

Madame Ranévsky. Cut down the cherry orchard! Excuse me, but you don't know what you are talking about. If there is one thing that's interesting, remarkable in fact, in the whole province, it's our cherry orchard.

Lopákhin. There's nothing remarkable about the orchard except that it's a very big one. It only bears once every two years, and then you don't know what to do with the fruit. Nobody wants to buy it.

Gáyef. Our cherry orchard is mentioned in Andréyevsky's Encyclopædia.

Lopákhin [*looking at his watch*]. If we don't make up our minds or think of any way, on the 22d of August the cherry orchard and the whole property will be sold by auction. Come, make up your mind! There's no other way out of it, I swear—absolutely none.

Firs. In the old days, forty or fifty years ago, they used to dry the cherries and soak 'em and pickle 'em, and make jam of 'em; and the dried cherries . . .

Gáyef. Shut up, Firs.

Firs. The dried cherries used to be sent in wagons to Moscow and Kharkof. A heap of money! The dried cherries were soft and juicy and sweet and sweet-smelling then. They knew some way in those days.

Madame Ranévsky. And why don't they do it now?

Firs. They've forgotten. Nobody remembers how to do it.

Pishtchik [*to* MADAME RANÉVSKY]. What about Paris? How did you get on? Did you eat frogs?

Madame Ranévsky. Crocodiles.

Pishtchik. You don't say so! Well, I never!

Lopákhin. Until a little while ago there was nothing but gentry and peasants in the villages; but now villa residents have made their appearance. All the towns, even the little ones, are surrounded by villas now. In another twenty years the villa resident will have multiplied like anything. At present he only sits and drinks tea on his veranda, but it is quite likely that he will soon take to cultivating his three acres of land, and then your old cherry orchard will become fruitful, rich and happy. . . .

Gáyef [*angry*]. What gibberish!

[*Enter* BARBARA *and* YÁSHA.]

Barbara [*taking out a key and noisily unlocking an old-fashioned cupboard*]. There are two telegrams for you, mamma. Here they are.

Madame Ranévsky [*tearing them up without reading them*]. They're from Paris. I've done with Paris.

Gáyef. Do you know how old this cupboard is, Lyuba? A week ago I pulled out the bottom drawer and saw a date burnt in it. That cupboard was made exactly a hun-

dred years ago. What do you think of that, eh? We might celebrate its jubilee. It's only an inanimate thing, but for all that it's a historic cupboard.

Pishtchik [*astonished*]. A hundred years? Well, I never!

Gáyef [*touching the cupboard*]. Yes, it's a wonderful thing. . . . Beloved and venerable cupboard, honor and glory to your existence, which for more than a hundred years has been directed to the noble ideals of justice and virtue. Your silent summons to profitable labor has never weakened in all these hundred years. [*Crying.*] You have upheld the courage of succeeding generations of our humankind; you have upheld faith in a better future and cherished in us ideals of goodness and social consciousness. [*A pause.*]

Lopákhin. Yes. . . .

Madame Ranévsky. You haven't changed, Leoníd.

Gáyef [*embarrassed*]. Off the white in the corner, cnip the red in the middle pocket!

Lopákhin [*looking at his watch*]. Well, I must be off.

Yásha [*handing a box to* MADAME RANÉVSKY]. Perhaps you'll take your pills now.

Pishtchik. You oughtn't to take medicine, dear lady. It does you neither good nor harm. Give them here, my friend. [*He empties all the pills into the palm of his hand, blows on them, puts them in his mouth, and swallows them down with a draught of quass.*] There!

Madame Ranévsky [*alarmed*]. Have you gone off your head?

Pishtchik. I've taken all the pills.

Lopákhin. Greedy feller!

[*Every one laughs.*]

Firs [*mumbling*]. They were here in Easter Week and finished off a gallon of pickled gherkins.

Madame Ranévsky. What's he talking about?

Barbara. He's been mumbling like that these three years. We've got used to it.

Yásha. Advancing age.

[CHARLOTTE *crosses in a white frock, very thin, tightly laced, with a lorgnette at her waist.*]

Lopákhin. Excuse me, Charlotte Ivánovna, I've not paid my respects to you yet. [*He prepares to kiss her hand.*]

Charlotte [*drawing her hand away*]. If one allows you to kiss one's hand, you will want to kiss one's elbow next, and then one's shoulder.

Lopákhin. I'm having no luck to-day. [*All laugh.*] Charlotte Ivánovna, do us a conjuring trick.

Madame Ranévsky. Charlotte, do do us a conjuring trick.

Charlotte. No, thank you. I'm going to bed. [*Exit* CHARLOTTE.]

Lopákhin. We shall meet again in three weeks. [*Kissing* MADAME RANÉVSKY'S *hand.*] Meanwhile, good-bye. I must be off. [*To* GÁYEF.] So-long. [*Kissing* PÍSHTCHIK.] Ta-ta. [*Shaking hands with* BARBARA, *then with* FIRS *and* YÁSHA.] I hate having to go. [*To* MADAME RANÉVSKY.] If you make up your mind about the villas, let me know, and I'll raise you five thousand pounds at once. Think it over seriously.

Barbara [*angrily*]. For Heaven's sake, do go!

Lopákhin. I'm going, I'm going.

[*Exit* LOPÁKHIN.]

Gáyef. Snob! . . . However, *pardon!* Barbara's going to marry him; he's Barbara's young man.

Barbara. You talk too much, uncle.

Madame Ranévsky. Why, Barbara, I shall be very glad. He's a nice man.

Pishtchik. Not a doubt of it. . . . A most worthy individual. My Dáshenka, she says . . . oh, she says . . . lots of things. [*Snoring and waking up again at once.*] By the by, dear lady, can you lend me twenty-five pounds? I've got to pay the interest on my mortgage to-morrow.

Barbara [*alarmed*]. We can't! We can't!

Madame Ranévsky. It really is a fact that I haven't any money.

Pishtchik. I'll find it somewhere. [*Laughing.*] I never lose hope. Last time I thought, "Now I really am done for, I'm a ruined man," when behold, they ran a railway over my land and paid me compensation. And so it'll be again; something will happen, if not to-day, then to-morrow. Dáshenka may win the twenty-thousand-pound prize; she's got a ticket in the lottery.

Madame Ranévsky. The coffee's finished. Let's go to bed.

Firs [*brushing* GÁYEF'S *clothes, admonishingly*]. You've put on the wrong trousers again. Whatever am I to do with you?

Barbara [*softly*]. Ánya is asleep. [*She opens the window quietly.*] The sun's up already; it

isn't cold now. Look, mamma, how lovely the trees are. Heavens! what a sweet air! The starlings are singing!

Gáyef [*opening the other window*]. The orchard is all white. You've not forgotten it, Lyuba? This long avenue going straight on, straight on, like a ribbon between the trees? It shines like silver on moonlight nights. Do you remember? You've not forgotten?

Madame Ranévsky [*looking out into the garden*]. Oh, my childhood, my pure and happy childhood! I used to sleep in this nursery. I used to look out from here into the garden. Happiness awoke with me every morning; and the orchard was just the same then as it is now; nothing is altered. [*Laughing with joy.*] It is all white, all white! Oh, my cherry orchard! After the dark and stormy autumn and the frosts of winter you are young again and full of happiness; the angels of heaven have not abandoned you. Oh! if only I could free my neck and shoulders from the stone that weighs them down! If only I could forget my past!

Gáyef. Yes; and this orchard will be sold to pay our debts, however impossible it may seem. . . .

Madame Ranévsky. Look! There's mamma walking in the orchard . . . in a white frock! [*Laughing with joy.*] There she is!

Gáyef. Where?

Barbara. Heaven help you!

Madame Ranévsky. There's no one there really. It only looked like it; there on the right where the path turns down to the summer-house; there's a white tree that leans over and looks like a woman.

[*Enter* TROPHÍMOF *in a shabby student uniform and spectacles.*]

Madame Ranévsky. What a wonderful orchard, with its white masses of blossom and the blue sky above!

Trophímof. Lyubóf Andréyevna! [*She looks around at him.*] I only want to say, "How do you do," and go away at once. [*Kissing her hand eagerly.*] I was told to wait till the morning, but I hadn't the patience.

[MADAME RANÉVSKY *looks at him in astonishment.*]

Barbara [*crying*]. This is Peter Trophímof.

Trophímof. Peter Trophímof; I was Grisha's tutor, you know. Have I really altered so much?

[MADAME RANÉVSKY *embraces him and cries softly.*]

Gáyef. Come, come, that's enough, Lyuba!

Barbara [*crying*]. I told you to wait till to-morrow, you know, Peter.

Madame Ranévsky. My little Grisha! My little boy! Grisha . . . my son. . . .

Barbara. It can't be helped, mamma. It was the will of God.

Trophímof [*gently, crying*]. There, there!

Madame Ranévsky [*crying*]. He was drowned. My little boy was drowned. Why? What was the use of that, my dear? [*In a softer voice.*] Ánya's asleep in there, and I am speaking so loud, and making a noise. . . . But tell me, Peter, why have you grown so ugly? Why have you grown so old?

Trophímof. An old woman in the train called me a "mouldy gentleman."

Madame Ranévsky. You were quite a boy then, a dear little student, and now your hair's going and you wear spectacles. Are you really still a student? [*Going toward the door.*]

Trophímof. Yes, I expect I shall be a perpetual student.

Madame Ranévsky [*kissing her brother and then* BARBARA]. Well, go to bed. You've grown old too, Leoníd.

Pishtchik [*following her*]. Yes, yes; time for bed. Oh, oh, my gout! I'll stay the night here. Don't forget, Lyubóf Andréyevna, my angel, to-morrow morning . . . twenty-five.

Gáyef. He's still on the same string.

Pishtchik. Twenty-five . . . to pay the interest on my mortgage.

Madame Ranévsky. I haven't any money, my friend.

Pishtchik. I'll pay you back, dear lady. It's a trifling sum.

Madame Ranévsky. Well, well, Leoníd will give it you. Let him have it, Leoníd.

Gáyef [*ironical*]. I'll give it him right enough! Hold your pocket wide![1]

Madame Ranévsky. It can't be helped. . . . He needs it. He'll pay it back.

[*Exeunt* MADAME RANÉVSKY, TROPHÍMOF, PÍSHTCHIK, *and* FIRS. GÁYEF, BARBARA, *and* YÁSHA *remain.*]

Gáyef. My sister hasn't lost her old habit of scattering the money. [*To* YÁSHA.] Go away, my lad! You smell of chicken.

Yásha [*laughing*]. You're just the same as you always were, Leoníd Andréyevitch!

Gáyef. Who's that? [*To* BARBARA.] What does he say?

[1] *Hold your pocket wide:* a proverbial piece of irony.

Barbara [*to* YÁSHA]. Your mother's come up from the village. She's been waiting for you since yesterday in the servants' hall. She wants to see you.

Yásha. What a nuisance she is!

Barbara. You wicked, unnatural son!

Yásha. Well, what do I want with her? She might just as well have waited till to-morrow. [*Exit* YÁSHA.]

Barbara. Mamma is just like she used to be; she hasn't changed a bit. If she had her way, she'd give away everything she has.

Gáyef. Yes. [*A pause.*] If people recommend very many cures for an illness, that means that the illness is incurable. I think and think, I batter my brains; I know of many remedies, very many, and that means really that there is none. How nice it would be to get a fortune left one by somebody! How nice it would be if Ánya could marry a very rich man! How nice it would be to go to Yaroslav and try my luck with my aunt the Countess. My aunt is very, very rich, you know.

Barbara [*crying softly*]. If only God would help us!

Gáyef. Don't howl! My aunt is very rich, but she does not like us. In the first place, my sister married a solicitor, not a nobleman. [ÁNYA *appears in the doorway.*] She married a man who was not a nobleman, and it's no good pretending that she has led a virtuous life. She's a dear, kind, charming creature, and I love her very much, but whatever mitigating circumstances one may find for her, there's no getting round it that she's a sinful woman. You can see it in her every gesture.

Barbara [*whispering*]. Ánya is standing in the door!

Gáyef. Who's that? [*A pause.*] It's very odd, something's got into my right eye. I can't see properly out of it. Last Thursday when I was down at the District Court . . .

[ÁNYA *comes down.*]

Barbara. Why aren't you asleep, Ánya?

Ánya. I can't sleep. It's no good trying.

Gáyef. My little pet! [*Kissing* ÁNYA'S *hands and face.*] My little girl! [*Crying.*] You're not my niece; you're my angel; you're my everything. Trust me, trust me. . . .

Ánya. I do trust you, uncle. Every one loves you, every one respects you; but dear, dear uncle, you ought to hold your tongue, only to hold your tongue. What were you saying just now about mamma?—about your own sister? What was the good of saying that?

Gáyef. Yes, yes. [*Covering his face with her hand.*] You're quite right; it was awful of me! Lord, Lord! Save me from myself! And a little while ago I made a speech over a cupboard. What a stupid thing to do! As soon as I had done it, I knew it was stupid.

Barbara. Yes, really, uncle. You ought to hold your tongue. Say nothing; that's all that's wanted.

Ánya. If only you would hold your tongue, you'd be so much happier!

Gáyef. I will! I will! [*Kissing* ÁNYA'S *and* BARBARA'S *hands.*] I'll hold my tongue. But there's one thing I must say; it's business. Last Thursday, when I was down at the District Court, a lot of us were there together, we began to talk about this and that, one thing and another, and it seems I could arrange a loan on note of hand to pay the interest into the bank.

Barbara. If only Heaven would help us!

Gáyef. I'll go in on Tuesday and talk it over again. [*To* BARBARA.] Don't howl! [*To* ÁNYA.] Your mamma shall have a talk with Lopákhin. Of course he won't refuse her. And as soon as you are rested you must go to see your grandmother, the Countess, at Yaroslav. We'll operate from three points, and the trick is done. We'll pay the interest, I'm certain of it. [*Taking sugar candy.*] I swear on my honor, or whatever you will, the property shall not be sold. [*Excitedly.*] I swear by my hope of eternal happiness! There's my hand on it. Call me a base, dishonorable man if I let it go to auction. I swear by my whole being!

Ánya [*calm again and happy*]. What a dear you are, uncle, and how clever! [*Embraces him.*] Now I'm easy again. I'm easy again! I'm happy!

[*Enter* FIRS.]

Firs [*reproachfully*]. Leoníd Andréyevitch, have you no fear of God? When are you going to bed?

Gáyef. I'm just off—just off. You get along, Firs. I'll undress myself all right. Come, children, by-bye! Details to-morrow, but now let's go to bed. [*Kissing* ÁNYA *and* BARBARA.] I'm a good Liberal, a man of the eighties. People abuse the eighties, but I think that I may say I've suffered something for my convictions in my time. It's not for nothing that the peasants love me. We ought

to know the peasants; we ought to know with what . . .

Ánya. You're at it again, uncle!

Barbara. Why don't you hold your tongue, uncle?

Firs [*angrily*]. Leoníd Andréyevitch!

Gáyef. I'm coming; I'm coming. Now go to bed. Off two cushions in the middle pocket! I start another life! . . . [*Exit, with* Firs *hobbling after him.*]

Ánya. Now my mind is at rest. I don't want to go to Yaroslav; I don't like grandmamma; but my mind is at rest, thanks to Uncle Leoníd. [*She sits down.*]

Barbara. Time for bed. I'm off. Whilst you were away there's been a scandal. You know that nobody lives in the old servants' quarters, except the old people, Ephim, Pauline, Evstignéy, and old Karp. Well, they took to having in all sorts of queer fish to sleep there with them. I didn't say a word. But at last I heard they had spread a report that I had given orders that they were to have nothing but peas to eat; out of stinginess, you understand? It was all Evstignéy's doing. "Very well," I said to myself, "you wait a bit." So I sent for Evstignéy. [*Yawning.*] He comes. "Now then, Evstignéy," I said, "you old imbecile, how do you dare . . ." [*Looking at* Ánya.] Ánya, Ánya! [*A pause.*] She's asleep. [*Taking* Ánya's *arm.*] Let's go to bed. Come along. [*Leading her away.*] Sleep on, my little one! Come along; come along! [*They go towards* Ánya's *room. In the distance beyond the orchard a shepherd plays his pipe.* Trophímof *crosses the stage and, seeing* Barbara *and* Ánya, *stops.*] 'Sh! She's asleep, she's asleep! Come along, my love.

Ánya [*drowsily*]. I'm so tired! Listen to the bells! Uncle, dear uncle! Mamma! Uncle!

Barbara. Come along, my love! Come along.

[*Exeunt* Barbara *and* Ánya *to the bedroom.*]

Trophímof [*with emotion*]. My sunshine! My spring!

ACT TWO

In the open fields; an old crooked half-ruined shrine. Near it a well; big stones, apparently old tombstones; an old bench. Road to the estate beyond. On one side rise dark poplar trees. Beyond them begins the cherry orchard. In the distance a row of telegraph poles, and, far away on the horizon, the dim outlines of a big town, visible only in fine, clear weather. It is near sunset.

Charlotte, Yásha, *and* Dunyásha *sit on the bench.* Ephikhódof *stands by them and plays on a guitar; they meditate.* Charlotte *wears an old peaked cap.*[1] *She has taken a gun from off her shoulders and is mending the buckle of the strap.*

Charlotte [*thoughtfully*]. I have no proper passport. I don't know how old I am; I always feel I am still young. When I was a little girl my father and mother used to go about from one country fair to another, giving performances, and very good ones, too. I used to do the *salto mortale* and all sorts of tricks. When papa and mamma died, an old German lady adopted me and educated me. Good! When I grew up I became a governess. But where I come from and who I am, I haven't a notion. Who my parents were—very likely they weren't married—I don't know. [*Taking a cucumber from her pocket and beginning to eat.*] I don't know anything about it. [*A pause.*] I long to talk so, and I have no one to talk to, I have no friends or relations.

Ephikhódof [*playing on the guitar and singing*].

"What is the noisy world to me?
Oh, what are friends and foes?"

How sweet it is to play upon a mandolin!

Dunyásha. That's a guitar, not a mandolin. [*She looks at herself in a hand-glass and powders her face.*]

Ephikhódof. For the madman who loves, it is a mandolin. [*Singing.*]

"Oh, that my heart were cheered
By the warmth of requited love."

[Yásha *joins in.*]

Charlotte. How badly these people do sing! Foo! Like jackals howling!

Dunyásha. [*To* Yásha.] What happiness it must be to live abroad!

Yásha. Of course it is; I quite agree with you. [*He yawns and lights a cigar.*]

Ephikhódof. It stands to reason. Everything abroad has attained a certain culmination.[2]

[1] *Furázhka*, the commonest men's headgear in Russia, shaped like a yachting cap.

[2] *Culmination.* This represents a similar blunder of Ephikhódof's in the original.

Yásha. That's right.

Ephikhódof. I am a man of cultivation; I have studied various remarkable books, but I cannot fathom the direction of my preferences; do I want to live or do I want to shoot myself, so to speak? But in order to be ready for all contingencies, I always carry a revolver in my pocket. Here it is. [*Showing revolver.*]

Charlotte. That's done. I'm off. [*Slinging the rifle over her shoulder.*] You're a clever fellow, Ephikhódof, and very alarming. Women must fall madly in love with you. Brrr! [*Going.*] These clever people are all so stupid; I have no one to talk to. I am always alone, always alone; I have no friends or relations, and who I am, or why I exist, is a mystery. [*Exit slowly.*]

Ephikhódof. Strictly speaking, without touching upon other matters, I must protest *inter alia* that destiny treats me with the utmost rigor, as a tempest might treat a small ship. If I labor under a misapprehension, how is it that when I woke up this morning, behold, so to speak, I perceived sitting on my chest a spider of preternatural dimensions, like that? [*Indicating with both hands.*] And if I go to take a draught of quass, I am sure to find something of the most indelicate character, in the nature of a cockroach. [*A pause.*] Have you read Buckle? [*A pause.—To* Dunyásha.] I should like to trouble you, Avdotya Fëdorovna,[1] for a momentary interview.

Dunyásha. Talk away.

Ephikhódof. I should prefer to conduct it *tête-à-tête.* [*Sighing.*]

Dunyásha [*confused*]. Very well, only first please fetch me my cloak.[2] It's by the cupboard. It's rather damp here.

Ephikhódof. Very well, mademoiselle. I will go and fetch it, mademoiselle. Now I know what to do with my revolver. [*Takes his guitar and exit, playing.*]

Yásha. Twenty-two misfortunes! Between you and me, he's a stupid fellow. [*Yawning.*]

Dunyásha. Heaven help him, he'll shoot himself! [*A pause.*] I have grown so nervous, I am always in a twitter. I was quite a little girl when they took me into the household, and now I have got quite disused to common life, and my hands are as white as white, like a lady's. I have grown so refined, so delicate and genteel, I am afraid of everything. I'm always frightened. And if you deceive me, Yásha, I don't know what will happen to my nerves.

Yásha [*kissing her*]. You little cucumber! Of course every girl ought to behave herself properly; there's nothing I dislike as much as when girls aren't proper in their behavior.

Dunyásha. I've fallen dreadfully in love with you. You're so educated; you can talk about anything! [*A pause.*]

Yásha [*yawning*]. Yes. . . . The way I look at it is this; if a girl falls in love with anybody, then I call her immoral. [*A pause.*] How pleasant it is to smoke one's cigar in the open air. [*Listening.*] There's some one coming. It's the missis and the rest of 'em. . . . [Dunyásha *embraces him hastily.*] Go towards the house as if you'd just been for a bathe. Go by this path or else they'll meet you and think that I've been walking out with you. I can't stand that sort of thing.

Dunyásha [*coughing softly*]. Your cigar has given me a headache.

[*Exit* Dunyásha. Yásha *remains sitting by the shrine.*]

[*Enter* Madame Ranévsky, Gáyef, *and* Lopákhin.

Lopákhin. You must make up your minds once and for all. Time waits for no man. The question is perfectly simple. Are you going to let off the land for villas or not? Answer in one way; yes or no? Only one word!

Madame Ranévsky. Who's smoking horrible cigars here? [*She sits down.*]

Gáyef. How handy it is now they've built that railway. [*Sitting.*] We've been into town for lunch and back again. . . . Red in the middle! I must just go up to the house and have a game.

Madame Ranévsky. There's no hurry.

Lopákhin. Only one word—yes or no! [*Entreatingly.*] Come, answer the question!

Gáyef [*yawning*]. Who's that?

Madame Ranévsky [*looking into her purse*]. I had a lot of money yesterday, but there's hardly any left now. Poor Barbara tries to save money by feeding us all on milk soup; the old people in the kitchen get nothing but peas, and yet I go squandering aimlessly. . . . [*Dropping her purse and scattering gold coins; vexed.*] There, I've dropped it all!

[1] *Avdotya Fëdorovna* (the ë is to be pronounced like the *yach* in *yacht.*) Dunya (diminutive Dunyásha), stands for Avdotya, formally Evdokiya, representing the Greek Eudoxia.

[2] *Cloak. Talmotchka,* a diminutive of *talma,* a sort of big cape, named after the tragedian.

Yásha. Allow me, I'll pick it up. [*Collecting the coins.*]

Madame Ranévsky. Yes, please do, Yásha! Whatever made me go into town for lunch? I hate your horrid restaurant with the organ, and the tablecloths all smelling of soap. Why do you drink so much, Leoníd? Why do you eat so much? Why do you talk so much? You talked too much at the restaurant again, and most unsuitably, about the seventies, and the decadents. And to whom? Fancy talking about decadents to the waiters!

Lopákhin. Quite true.

Gáyef [*with a gesture*]. I'm incorrigible, that's plain. [*Irritably to* YÁSHA.] What do you keep dodging about in front of me for?

Yásha [*laughing*]. I can't hear your voice without laughing.

Gáyef [*To* MADAME RANÉVSKY]. Either he or I . . .

Madame Ranévsky. Go away, Yásha; run along.

Yásha [*handing* MADAME RANÉVSKY *her purse*]. I'll go at once. [*Restraining his laughter with difficulty.*] This very minute. [*Exit.*]

Lopákhin. Derigánof, the millionaire, wants to buy your property. They say he'll come to the auction himself.

Madame Ranévsky. How did you hear?

Lopákhin. I was told so in town.

Gáyef. Our aunt at Yaroslav has promised to send something; but I don't know when, or how much.

Lopákhin. How much will she send? Ten thousand pounds? Twenty thousand pounds?

Madame Ranévsky. Oh, come. . . . A thousand or fifteen hundred at the most.

Lopákhin. Excuse me, but in all my life I never met anybody so frivolous as you two, so crazy and unbusiness-like! I tell you in plain Russian your property is going to be sold, and you don't seem to understand what I say.

Madame Ranévsky. Well, what are we to do? Tell us what you want us to do.

Lopákhin. Don't I tell you every day? Every day I say the same thing over and over again. You must lease off the cherry orchard and the rest of the estate for villas; you must do it at once, this very moment; the auction will be on you in two twos! Try and understand. Once you make up your mind there are to be villas, you can get all the money you want, and you're saved.

Madame Ranévsky. Villas and villa residents, oh, please, . . . it's so vulgar!

Gáyef. I quite agree with you.

Lopákhin. I shall either cry, or scream, or faint. I can't stand it! You'll be the death of me. [*To* GÁYEF.] You're an old woman!

Gáyef. Who's that?

Lopákhin. You're an old woman! [*Going.*]

Madame Ranévsky [*frightened*]. No, don't go. Stay here, there's a dear! Perhaps we shall think of some way.

Lopákhin. What's the good of thinking!

Madame Ranévsky. Please don't go; I want you. At any rate, it's gayer when you're here. [*A pause.*] I keep expecting something to happen, as if the house were going to tumble down about our ears.

Gáyef [*in deep abstraction*]. Off the cushion on the corner; double into the middle pocket . . .

Madame Ranévsky. We have been very, very sinful!

Lopákhin. You! What sins have you committed?

Gáyef [*eating candy*]. They say I've devoured all my substance in sugar candy. [*Laughing.*]

Madame Ranévsky. Oh, the sins that I have committed . . . I've always squandered money at random like a mad-woman; I married a man who made nothing but debts. My husband drank himself to death on champagne; he was a fearful drinker. Then for my sins I fell in love and went off with another man; and immediately—that was my first punishment—a blow full on the head . . . here, in this very river . . . my little boy was drowned; and I went abroad, right, right away, never to come back any more, never to see this river again. . . . I shut my eyes and ran, like a mad thing, and *he* came after me, pitiless and cruel. I bought a villa at Mentone, because he fell ill there, and for three years I knew no rest day or night; the sick man tormented and wore down my soul. Then, last year, when my villa was sold to pay my debts, I went off to Paris, and he came and robbed me of everything, left me and took up with another woman, and I tried to poison myself. . . . It was all so stupid, so humiliating. . . , Then suddenly I longed to be back in Russia. in my own country, with my little girl. . . . [*Wiping away her tears.*] Lord, Lord, be merciful to me; forgive my sins! Do not punish me any more! [*Taking a telegram from*

her pocket.] I got this to-day from Paris. . . . He asks to be forgiven, begs me to go back. . . . [*Tearing up the telegram.*] Isn't that music that I hear? [*Listening.*]

Gáyef. That's our famous Jewish band. You remember? Four fiddles, a flute, and a double bass.

Madame Ranévsky. Does it still exist? We must make them come up sometime; we'll have a dance.

Lopákhin [*listening.*] I don't hear anything. [*Singing softly.*]

"The Germans for a fee will turn
A Russ into a Frenchman."

[*Laughing.*] I saw a very funny piece at the theatre last night; awfully funny!

Madame Ranévsky. It probably wasn't a bit funny. You people oughtn't to go and see plays; you ought to try to see yourselves; to see what a dull life you lead, and how much too much you talk.

Lopákhin. Quite right. To tell the honest truth, our life's an imbecile affair. [*A pause.*] My papa was a peasant, an idiot; he understood nothing; he taught me nothing; all he did was to beat me, when he was drunk, with a walking-stick. As a matter of fact I'm just as big a blockhead and idiot as he was. I never did any lessons; my handwriting's abominable; I write so badly I'm ashamed before people; like a pig.

Madame Ranévsky. You ought to get married.

Lopákhin. Yes, that's true.

Madame Ranévsky. Why not marry Barbara? She's a nice girl.

Lopákhin. Yes.

Madame Ranévsky. She's a nice straightforward creature; works all day; and what's most important, she loves you. You've been fond of her for a long time.

Lopákhin. Well, why not? I'm quite willing. She's a very nice girl. [*A pause.*]

Gáyef. I've been offered a place in a bank. Six hundred pounds a year. Do you hear?

Madame Ranévsky. You in a bank! Stay where you are.

[*Enter* FIRS, *carrying an overcoat.*]

Firs. [*To* GÁYEF.] Put this on, please, master; it's getting damp.

Gáyef [*putting on the coat*]. What a plague you are, Firs!

Firs. What's the use. . . . You went off and never told me. [*Examining his clothes.*]

Madame Ranévsky. How old you've got, Firs!

Firs. I beg your pardon?

Lopákhin. She says how old you've got!

Firs. I've been alive a long time. When they found me a wife, your father wasn't even born yet. [*Laughing.*] And when the Liberation came I was already chief valet. But I wouldn't have any Liberation then; I stayed with the master. [*A pause.*] I remember how happy everybody was, but why they were happy they didn't know themselves.

Lopákhin. It was fine before then. Anyway they used to flog 'em.

Firs [*mishearing him*]. I should think so! The peasants minded the masters, and the masters minded the peasants, but now it's all higgledy-piggledy; you can't make head or tail of it.

Gáyef. Shut up, Firs. I must go into town again to-morrow. I've been promised an introduction to a general who'll lend money on a bill.

Lopákhin. You'll do no good. You won't even pay the interest; set your mind at ease about that.

Madame Ranévsky. [*to* LOPÁKHIN.] He's only talking nonsense. There's no such general at all.

[*Enter* TROPHÍMOF, ÁNYA *and* BARBARA.]

Gáyef. Here come the others.

Ánya. Here's mamma.

Madame Ranévsky [*tenderly*]. Come along, come along . . . my little ones. . . . [*Embracing Ánya and* BARBARA.] If only you knew how much I love you both! Sit beside me . . . there, like that. [*Every one sits.*]

Lopákhin. The Perpetual Student's always among the girls.

Trophímof. It's no affair of yours.

Lopákhin. He's nearly fifty and still a student.

Trophímof. Stop your idiotic jokes!

Lopákhin. What are you losing your temper for, silly?

Trophímof. Why can't you leave me alone?

Lopákhin [*laughing*]. I should like to know what your opinion is of me.

Trophímof. My opinion of you, Yermolái Alexéyitch, is this. You're a rich man; you'll soon be a millionaire. Just as a beast of prey which devours everything that comes in its way is necessary for the conversion of matter, so you are necessary, too. [*All laugh.*]

Barbara. Tell us something about the planets, Peter, instead.

Madame Ranévsky. No. Let's go on with the conversation we were having yesterday.

Trophímof. What about?

Gáyef. About the proud man.

Trophímof. We had a long talk yesterday, but we didn't come to any conclusion. There is something mystical in the proud man in the sense in which you use the words. You may be right from your point of view, but, if we look at it simple-mindedly, what room is there for pride? Is there any sense in it, when man is so poorly constructed from the physiological point of view, when the vast majority of us are so gross and stupid and profoundly unhappy? We must give up admiring ourselves. The only thing to do is to work.

Gáyef. We shall die all the same.

Trophímof. Who knows? And what does it mean, to die? Perhaps man has a hundred senses, and when he dies only the five senses that we know perish with him, and the other ninety-five remain alive.

Madame Ranévsky. How clever you are, Peter!

Lopákhin [*ironically*]. Oh, extraordinary!

Trophímof. Mankind marches forward, perfecting its strength. Everything that is unattainable for us now will one day be near and clear; but we must work; we must help with all our force those who seek for truth. At present only a few men work in Russia. The vast majority of the educated people that I know seek after nothing, do nothing, and are as yet incapable of work. They call themselves the "Intelligentsia," they say "thou" and "thee" to the servants, they treat the peasants like animals, learn nothing, read nothing serious, do absolutely nothing, only talk about science, and understand little or nothing about art. They are all serious; they all have solemn faces; they only discuss important subjects; they philosophize; but meanwhile the vast majority of us, ninety-nine per cent, live like savages; at the least thing they curse and punch people's heads; they eat like beasts and sleep in dirt and bad air; there are bugs everywhere, evil smells, damp and moral degradation. . . . It's plain that all our clever conversations are only meant to distract our own attention and other people's. Show me where those crèches are, that they're always talking so much about; or those reading-rooms. They are only things people write about in novels; they don't really exist at all. Nothing exists but dirt, vulgarity, and Asiatic ways. I am afraid of solemn faces; I dislike them; I am afraid of solemn conversations. Let us rather hold our tongues.

Lopákhin. Do you know, I get up at five every morning; I work from morning till night; I am always handling my own money or other people's, and I see the sort of men there are about me. One only has to begin to do anything to see how few honest and decent people there are. Sometimes, as I lie awake in bed, I think: "O Lord, you have given us mighty forests, boundless fields and immeasurable horizons, and, we living in their midst, ought really to be giants."

Madame Ranévsky. Oh, dear, you want giants! They are all very well in fairy stories; but in real life they are rather alarming.

[Ephikhódof *passes at the back of the scene, playing on his guitar.*]

Madame Ranévsky [*pensively*]. There goes Ephikhódof.

Ánya [*pensively*]. There goes Ephikhódof.

Gáyef. The sun has set.

Trophímof. Yes.

Gáyef [*as if declaiming, but not loud*]. O Nature, wonderful Nature, you glow with eternal light; beautiful and indifferent, you whom we call our mother, uniting in yourself both life and death, you animate and you destroy . . .

Barbara [*entreatingly*]. Uncle!

Ánya. You're at it again, uncle.

Trophímof. You'd far better double the red into the middle pocket.

Gáyef. I'll hold my tongue! I'll hold my tongue!

[*They all sit pensively. Silence reigns, broken only by the mumbling of old* Firs. *Suddenly a distant sound is heard as if from the sky, the sound of a string breaking, dying away, melancholy.*]

Madame Ranévsky. What's that?

Lopákhin. I don't know. It's a lifting-tub given away somewhere away in the mines. It must be a long way off.

Gáyef. Perhaps it's some sort of bird . . . a heron, or something.

Trophímof. Or an owl. . . .

Madame Ranévsky [*shuddering*]. There is something uncanny about it!

Firs. The same thing happened before the

great misfortune: the owl screeched and the samovar kept humming.

Gáyef. What great misfortune?

Firs. The Liberation. [*A pause.*]

Madame Ranévsky. Come, every one, let's go in; it's getting late. [*To* Ánya.] You've tears in your eyes. What is it, little one? [*Embracing her.*]

Ánya. Nothing, mamma. I'm all right.

Trophímof. There's some one coming.

[*A* Tramp *appears in a torn white peaked cap and overcoat. He is slightly drunk.*]

Tramp. Excuse me, but can I go through this way straight to the station?

Gáyef. Certainly. Follow this path.

Tramp. I am uncommonly obliged to you, sir. [*Coughing.*] We're having lovely weather. [*Declaiming.*] "Brother, my suffering brother" . . . "Come forth to the Volga. Who moans?" . . . [*To* Barbara.] Mademoiselle, please spare a sixpence for a hungry fellow-countryman.

[Barbara, *frightened, screams.*]

Lopákhin [*angrily*]. There's a decency for every indecency to observe!

Madame Ranévsky. Take this; here you are. [*Fumbling in her purse.*] I haven't any silver. . . . Never mind, take this sovereign.

Tramp. I am uncommonly obliged to you, madam. [*Exit* Tramp. *Laughter.*]

Barbara [*frightened*]. I'm going! I'm going! Oh, mamma, there's nothing for the servants to eat at home, and you've gone and given this man a sovereign.

Madame Ranévsky. What's to be done with your stupid old mother? I'll give you up everything I have when I get back. Yermolái Alexéyitch, lend me some more money.

Lopákhin. Very good.

Madame Ranévsky. Come along, every one; it's time to go in. We've settled all about your marriage between us, Barbara. I wish you joy.

Barbara [*through her tears*]. You mustn't joke about such things, mamma.

Lopákhin. Amelia, get thee to a nunnery, go!

Gáyef. My hands are all trembling; it's ages since I had a game of billiards.

Lopákhin. Amelia, nymphlet, in thine orisons remember me.[1]

Madame Ranévsky. Come along. It's nearly supper-time.

[1] There is a wretched pun in the original: Ophelia is called Okhmelia (from *okhmelét*, to get drunk).

Barbara. How he frightened me! My heart is simply throbbing.

Lopákhin. Allow me to remind you, the cherry orchard is to be sold on the 22d of August. Bear that in mind; bear that in mind!

[*Exeunt all except* Trophímof *and* Ánya.]

Ánya [*laughing*]. Many thanks to the Tramp for frightening Barbara; at last we are alone.

Trophímof. Barbara's afraid we shall go and fall in love with each other. Day after day she never leaves us alone. With her narrow mind she cannot undertsand that we are above love. To avoid everything petty, everything illusory, everything that prevents one from being free and happy, that is the whole meaning and purpose of our life. Forward! We march on irresistibly towards that bright star which burns far, far before us! Forward! Don't tarry, comrades!

Ánya [*clasping her hands*]. What beautiful things you say! [*A pause.*] Isn't it enchanting here to-day!

Trophímof. Yes, it's wonderful weather.

Ánya. What have you done to me, Peter? Why is it that I no longer love the cherry orchard as I did? I used to love it so tenderly; I thought there was no better place on earth than our garden.

Trophímof. All Russia is our garden. The earth is great and beautiful; it is full of wonderful places. [*A pause.*] Think, Ánya, your grandfather, your great-grandfather and all your ancestors were serf-owners, owners of living souls. Do not human spirits look out at you from every tree in the orchard, from every leaf and every stem? Do you not hear human voices? . . . Oh! it is terrible. Your orchard frightens me. When I walk through it in the evening or at night, the rugged bark on the trees glows with a dim light, and the cherry trees seem to see all that happened a hundred and two hundred years ago in painful and oppressive dreams. Well, well, we have fallen at least two hundred years behind the times. We have achieved nothing at all as yet; we have not made up our minds how we stand with the past; we only philosophize, complain of boredom, or drink vodka. It is so plain that, before we can live in the present, we must first redeem the past, and have done with it; and it is only by suffering that we can redeem it, only by strenuous, unremitting toil. Understand that, Ánya.

Ánya. The house we live in has long since ceased to be our house; and I shall go away, I give you my word.

Trophímof. If you have the household keys, throw them in the well and go away. Be free, be free as the wind.

Ánya [*enthusiastically*]. How beautifully you put it!

Trophímof. Believe what I say, Ánya; believe what I say. I'm not thirty yet; I am still young, still a student; but what I have been through! I am hungry as the winter; I am sick, anxious, poor as a beggar. Fate has tossed me hither and thither; I have been everywhere, everywhere. But wherever I have been, every minute, day and night, my soul has been full of mysterious anticipations. I feel the approach of happiness, Ánya; I see it coming. . . .

Ánya [*pensively*]. The moon is rising.

[Ephikhódof *is heard still playing the same sad tune on his guitar. The moon rises. Somewhere beyond the poplar trees,* Barbara *is heard calling for* Ánya: *"Ánya, where are you?"*]

Trophímof. Yes, the moon is rising. [*A pause.*] There it is, there is happiness; it is coming towards us, nearer and nearer; I can hear the sound of its footsteps. . . . And if we do not see it, if we do not know it, what does it matter? Others will see it.

Barbara [*without*]. Ánya? Where are you?

Trophímof. There's Barbara again! [*Angrily.*] It really is too bad!

Ánya. Never mind. Let us go down to the river. It's lovely there.

Trophímof. Come on!

[*Exeunt* Ánya *and* Trophímof.]

Barbara [*without*]. Ánya! Ánya!

ACT THREE

A sitting-room separated by an arch from a big drawing-room behind. Chandelier lighted. The Jewish band mentioned in Act II is heard playing on the landing. Evening. In the drawing-room they are dancing the grand rond. Simeónof-Píshtchik *is heard crying, "Promenade à une paire!"*

The dancers come down into the sitting-room. The first pair consists of Píshtchik *and* Charlotte; *the second of* Trophímof *and* Madame Ranévsky; *the third of* Ánya *and the* Post-Office Official; *the fourth of* Barbara *and the* Stationmaster, *etc., etc.* Barbara *is crying softly and wipes away the tears as she dances. In the last pair comes* Dunyásha. *They cross the sitting-room.*

Píshtchik. "Grand rond, balancez . . . Les cavaliersà genou et remerciez vos dames."

[Firs *in evening dress carries seltzer water across on a tray.* Píshtchik *and* Trophímof *come down into the sitting-room.*]

Píshtchik. I am a full-blooded man; I've had two strokes already; it's hard work dancing, but, as the saying goes, "If you run with the pack, bark or no, but anyway wag your tail." I'm as strong as a horse. My old father, who was fond of his joke, rest his soul, used to say, talking of our pedigree, that the ancient stock of the Simeónof-Píshtchiks was descended from that very horse that Caligula made a senator. . . . [*Sitting.*] But the worst of it is, I've got no money. A hungry dog believes in nothing but meat. [*Snoring and waking up again at once.*] I'm just the same . . . It's nothing but money, money, with me.

Trophímof. Yes, it's quite true, there is something horse-like about your build.

Píshtchik. Well, well . . . a horse is a jolly creature . . . you can sell a horse.

[*A sound of billiards being played in the next room.* Barbara *appears in the drawing-room beyond the arch.*]

Trophímof [*teasing her*]. Madame Lopákhin! Madame Lopákhin.

Barbara [*angrily*]. Mouldy gentleman!

Trophímof. Yes, I'm a mouldy gentleman, and I'm proud of it.

Barbara [*bitterly*]. We've hired the band, but where's the money to pay for it? [*Exit.*]

Trophímof. [*To* Píshtchik.] If the energy which you have spent in the course of your whole life in looking for money to pay the interest on your loans had been diverted to some other purpose, you would have had enough of it, I dare say, to turn the world upside down.

Píshtchik. Nietzsche the philosopher, a very remarkable man, very famous, a man of gigantic intellect, says in his works that it's quite right to forge bank notes.

Trophímof. What, have you read Nietzsche?

Píshtchik. Well . . . Dáshenka told me. . . . But I'm in such a hole, I'd forge 'em for twopence. I've got to pay thirty-one pounds the day after to-morrow. . . . I've got thirteen pounds already. [*Feeling his pockets;*

alarmed.] My money's gone! I've lost my money! [*Crying.*] Where's my money got to? [*Joyfully.*] Here it is, inside the lining. . . . It's thrown me all in a perspiration.

[*Enter* MADAME RANÉVSKY *and* CHARLOTTE.]

Madame Ranévsky [*humming a lezginka*[1]]. Why is Leoníd so long? What can he be doing in the town? [*To* DUNYÁSHA.] Dunyásha, ask the musicians if they'll have some tea.

Trophímof. The sale did not come off, in all probability.

Madame Ranévsky. It was a stupid day for the musicians to come; it was a stupid day to have this dance. . . . Well, well, it doesn't matter. . . . [*She sits down and sings softly to herself.*]

Charlotte [*giving* PÍSHTCHIK *a pack of cards*]. Here is a pack of cards. Think of any card you like.

Pishtchik. I've thought of one.

Charlotte. Now shuffle the pack. That's all right. Give them here, oh, most worthy Mr. Pishtchik. Ein, zwei, drei! Now look and you'll find it in your side pocket.

Pishtchik [*taking a card from his side pocket*]. The Eight of Spades! You're perfectly right. [*Astonished.*] Well, I never!

Charlotte [*holding the pack on the palm of her hand, to* TROPHÍMOF]. Say quickly, what's the top card?

Trophímof. Well, say the Queen of Spades.

Charlotte. Right! [*To* PÍSHTCHIK.] Now, then, what's the top card?

Pishtchik. Ace of Hearts.

Charlotte. Right! [*She claps her hands; the pack of cards disappears.*] What a beautiful day we've been having.

[*A mysterious female* VOICE *answers her as if from under the floor:* "Yes, indeed, a charming day, mademoiselle."]

Charlotte. You are my beautiful ideal.

The Voice. "I think you also ferry peautiful, mademoiselle."

Stationmaster [*applauding*]. Bravo, Miss Ventriloquist!

Pishtchik [*astonished*]. Well, I never! Bewitching Charlotte Ivánovna, I'm head over ears in love with you.

Charlotte. In love! [*Shrugging her shoulders.*] Are you capable of love? Guter Mensch, aber schlechter Musikant!

[1] *Lezginka.* A lively Caucasian dance in two-four time, popularized by Glinka, and by Rubinstein in his opera, *Demon.*

Trophímof [*slapping* PÍSHTCHIK *on the shoulder*]. You old horse!

Charlotte. Now, attention, please; one more trick. [*Taking a shawl from a chair.*] Now here's a shawl, and a very pretty shawl; I'm going to sell this very pretty shawl. [*Shaking it.*] Who'll buy? who'll buy?

Pishtchik [*astonished*]. Well, I never!

Charlotte. Ein, zwei, drei!

[*She lifts the shawl quickly; behind it stands* ÁNYA, *who drops a curtsy, runs to her mother, kisses her, then runs up into the drawing-room amid general applause.*]

Madame Ranévsky [*applauding*]. Bravo! bravo!

Charlotte. Once more. Ein, zwei, drei!

[*She lifts up the shawl; behind it stands* BARBARA, *bowing.*]

Pishtchik [*astonished*]. Well, I never!

Charlotte. That's all. [*She throws her shawl over* PÍSHTCHIK, *makes a curtsy and runs up into the drawing-room.*]

Pishtchik [*hurrying after her*]. You little rascal . . . there's a girl for you, there's a girl. . . . [*Exit*]

Madame Ranévsky. And still no sign of Leoníd. What he's doing in the town so long, I can't understand. It must be all over by now; the property's sold; or the auction never came off; why does he keep me in suspense so long?

Barbara [*trying to soothe her*]. Uncle has bought it, I am sure of that.

Trophímof [*mockingly*]. Of course he has.

Barbara. Grannie sent him a power of attorney to buy it in her name and transfer the mortgage. She's done it for Ánya's sake. I'm perfectly sure that Heaven will help us and uncle will buy it.

Madame Ranévsky. Your Yaroslav grannie sent fifteen hundred pounds to buy the property in her name—she doesn't trust us—but it wouldn't be enough even to pay the interest. [*Covering her face with her hands.*] My fate is being decided to-day, my fate. . . .

Trophímof [*teasing* BARBARA]. Madame Lopákhin!

Barbara [*angrily*]. Perpetual Student! He's been sent down twice from the University.

Madame Ranévsky. Why do you get angry, Barbara? He calls you Madame Lopákhin for fun. Why not? You can marry Lopákhin if you like; he's a nice, interesting man; you

needn't if you don't; nobody wants to force you, my pet.

Barbara. I take it very seriously, mamma, I must confess. He's a nice man and I like him.

Madame Ranévsky. Then marry him. There's no good putting it off that I can see.

Barbara. But, mamma, I can't propose to him myself. For two whole years everybody's been talking about him to me, every one; but he either says nothing or makes a joke of it. I quite understand. He's making money; he's always busy; he can't be bothered with me. If I only had some money, even a little, even ten pounds, I would give everything up and go right away. I would go into a nunnery.

Trophímof [*mocking*]. What bliss!

Barbara [*to* TROPHÍMOF]. A student ought to be intelligent. [*In a gentler voice, crying.*] How ugly you've grown, Peter; how old you've grown! [*She stops crying; to* MADAME RANÉVSKY.] But I can't live without work, mamma. I must have something to do every minute of the day.

[*Enter* YÁSHA]

Yásha [*trying not to laugh*]. Ephikhódof has broken a billiard cue. [*Exit.*]

Barbara. What's Ephikhódof doing here? Who gave him leave to play billiards? I don't understand these people. [*Exit.*]

Madame Ranévsky. Don't tease her, Peter. Don't you see that she's unhappy enough already?

Trophímof. I wish she wouldn't be so fussy, always meddling in other people's affairs. The whole summer she's given me and Ánya no peace; she is afraid we'll work up a romance between us. What business is it of hers? I'm sure I never gave her any grounds; I'm not likely to be so commonplace. We are above love!

Madame Ranévsky. Then I suppose I must be beneath love. [*Deeply agitated.*] Why doesn't Leoníd come? Oh, if only I knew whether the property's sold or not! It seems such an impossible disaster, that I don't know what to think. . . . I'm bewildered . . . I shall burst out screaming, I shall do something idiotic. Save me, Peter; say something to me, say something. . . .

Trophímof. Whether the property is sold to-day or whether it's not sold, surely it's all one? It's all over with it long ago; there's no turning back; the path is overgrown. Be calm, dear Lyubóf Andréyevna. You mustn't deceive yourself any longer, for once you must look the truth straight in the face.

Madame Ranévsky. What truth? You can see what's truth, and what's untruth, but I seem to have lost the power of vision; I see nothing. You settle every important question so boldly; but tell me, Peter, isn't that because you're young, because you have never solved any question of your own as yet by suffering? You look boldly ahead; isn't it only that you don't see or divine anything terrible in the future; because life is still hidden from your young eyes? You are bolder, honester, deeper than we are, but reflect, show me just a finger's breadth of consideration, take pity on me. Don't you see? I was born here, my father and mother lived here, and my grandfather; I love this house; without the cherry orchard my life has no meaning for me, and if it *must* be sold, then for Heaven's sake, sell me too! [*Embracing* TROPHÍMOF *and kissing him on the forehead.*] My little boy was drowned here. [*Crying.*] Be gentle with me, dear, kind Peter.

Trophímof. You know I sympathize with all my heart.

Madame Ranévsky. Yes, yes, but you ought to say it somehow differently. [*Taking out her handkerchief and dropping a telegram.*] I am so wretched to-day, you can't imagine! All this noise jars on me, my heart jumps at every sound. I tremble all over; but I can't shut myself up; I am afraid of the silence when I'm alone. Don't be hard on me, Peter; I love you like a son. I would gladly let Ánya marry you, I swear it; but you must work, Peter; you must get your degree. You do nothing; Fate tosses you about from place to place; and that's not right. It's true what I say, isn't it? And you must do something to your beard to make it grow better. [*Laughing.*] I can't help laughing at you.

Trophímof [*picking up the telegram*]. I don't wish to be an Adonis.

Madame Ranévsky. It's a telegram from Paris. I get them every day. One came yesterday, another to-day. That savage is ill again; he's in a bad way. . . . He asks me to forgive him, he begs me to come; and I really ought to go to Paris and be with him. You look at me sternly; but what am I do to, Peter? What am I to do? He's ill, he's lonely, he's unhappy. Who is to look after him? Who is to keep him from doing stupid

things? Who is to give him his medicine when it's time? After all, why should I be ashamed to say it? I love him, that's plain. I love him. I love him. . . . My love is like a stone tied round my neck; it's dragging me down to the bottom; but I love my stone. I can't live without it. [*Squeezing* TROPHÍMOF'S *hand.*] Don't think ill of me, Peter; don't say anything! Don't say anything!

Trophímof [*crying*]. Forgive my bluntness, for Heaven's sake; but the man has simply robbed you.

Madame Ranévsky. No, no, no! [*Stopping her ears.*] You mustn't say that!

Trophímof. He's a rascal; everybody sees it but yourself; he's a petty rascal, a ne'er-do-well . . .

Madame Ranévsky [*angry but restrained*]. You're twenty-six or twenty-seven, and you're still a Lower School boy![1]

Trophímof. Who cares?

Madame Ranévsky. You ought to be a man by now; at your age you ought to understand people who love. You ought to love some one yourself, you ought to be in love! [*Angrily.*] Yes, yes! It's not purity with you; it's simply you're a smug, a figure of fun, a freak. . . .

Trophímof [*horrified*]. What does she say?

Madame Ranévsky. "I am above love!" You're not above love; you're simply what Firs calls a "job-lot." At your age you ought to be ashamed not to have a mistress!

Trophímof [*aghast*]. This is awful! What does she say? [*Going quickly up into the drawing-room, clasping his head with his hands.*] This is something awful! I can't stand it; I'm off . . . [*Exit, but returns at once.*] All is over between us! [*Exit to landing.*]

Madame Ranévsky [*calling after him*]. Stop, Peter! Don't be ridiculous; I was only joking! Peter!

[TROPHÍMOF *is heard on the landing going quickly down the stairs, and suddenly falling down them with a crash.* ÁNYA *and* BARBARA *scream. A moment later the sound of laughter.*]

Madame Ranévsky. What has happened?

[ÁNYA *runs in.*]

Ánya [*laughing*]. Peter's tumbled downstairs. [*She runs out again.*]

Madame Ranévsky. What a ridiculous fellow he is!

[*The* STATIONMASTER *stands in the middle of the drawing-room beyond the arch and recites Alexey Tolstoy's poem, "The Sinner." Everybody stops to listen, but after a few lines the sound of a waltz is heard from the landing and he breaks off. All dance.* TROPHÍMOF, ÁNYA, BARBARA, *and* MADAME RANÉVSKY *enter from the landing.*]

Madame Ranévsky. Come, Peter, come, you pure spirit. . . . I beg your pardon. Let's have a dance. [*She dances with* TROPHÍMOF. ÁNYA *and* BARBARA *dance.*]

[*Enter* FIRS, *and stands his walking-stick by the side door. Enter* YÁSHA *by the drawing-room; he stands looking at the dancers.*]

Yásha. Well, grandfather?

Firs. I'm not feeling well. In the old days it was generals and barons and admirals that danced at our dances, but now we send for the Postmaster and the Stationmaster, and even they make a favor of coming. I'm sort of weak all over. The old master, their grandfather, used to give us all sealing wax, when we had anything the matter. I've taken sealing wax every day for twenty years and more. Perhaps that's why I'm still alive.

Yásha. I'm sick of you, grandfather. [*Yawning.*] I wish you'd die and have done with it.

Firs. Ah! you . . . job-lot. [*He mumbles to himself.*]

[TROPHÍMOF *and* MADAME RANÉVSKY *dance beyond the arch and down into the sitting-room.*]

Madame Ranévsky. Merci. I'll sit down. [*Sitting.*] I'm tired.

[*Enter* ÁNYA.]

Ánya [*agitated*]. There was somebody in the kitchen just now saying that the cherry orchard was sold to-day.

Madame Ranévsky. Sold? Who to?

Ánya. He didn't say who to. He's gone. [*She dances with* TROPHÍMOF. *Both dance up into the drawing-room.*]

Yásha. It was some old fellow chattering; a stranger.

Firs. And still Leoníd Andréyitch doesn't come. He's wearing his light overcoat, *demi-saison;* he'll catch cold as like as not. Ah, young wood, green wood!

Madame Ranévsky. This is killing me. Yásha, go and find out who it was sold to.

[1] Literally, a gymnasiast of the second form (from the bottom).

Yásha. Why, he's gone long go, the old man. [*Laughs.*]

Madame Ranévsky [*vexed*]. What are you laughing at? What are you glad about?

Yásha. He's a ridiculous fellow is Ephikhódof. Nothing in him. Twenty-two misfortunes!

Madame Ranévsky. Firs, if the property is sold, where will you go to?

Firs. Wherever you tell me, there I'll go.

Madame Ranévsky. Why do you look like that? Are you ill? You ought to be in bed.

Firs [*ironically*]. Oh, yes, I'll go to bed, and who'll hand the things round, who'll give orders? I've the whole house on my hands.

Yásha. Lyubóf Andréyevna! Let me ask a favor of you; be so kind; if you go to Paris again, take me with you, I beseech you. It's absolutely impossible for me to stay here. [*Looking about; sotto voce.*] What's the use of talking? You can see for yourself this is a barbarous country; the people have no morals; and the boredom! The food in the kitchen is something shocking, and on the top of it old Firs going about mumbling irrelevant nonsense. Take me back with you; be so kind!

[*Enter* Píshtchik.]

Pishtchik. May I have the pleasure . . . a bit of a waltz, charming lady? [Madame Ranévsky *takes his arm.*] All the same, enchanting lady, you must let me have eighteen pounds. [*Dancing.*] Let me have . . . eighteen pounds. [*Exeunt dancing through the arch.*]

Yásha [*singing to himself*].

"Oh, wilt thou understand
The turmoil of my soul?"

[*Beyond the arch appears a figure in gray tall hat and check trousers, jumping and waving its arms. Cries of* "Bravo, Charlotte Ivánovna."]

Dunyásha [*stopping to powder her face*]. Mamselle Ánya tells me I'm to dance; there are so many gentlemen and so few ladies. But dancing makes me giddy and makes my heart beat, Firs Nikoláyevitch; and just now the gentleman from the post-office said something so nice to me, oh, so nice! It quite took my breath away. [*The music stops.*]

Firs. What did he say to you?

Dunyásha. He said, "You are like a flower."

Yásha [*yawning*]. Cad! [*Exit.*]

Dunyásha. Like a flower! I am so ladylike and refined, I dote on compliments.

Firs. You'll come to a bad end.

[*Enter* Ephikhódof.]

Ephikhódof. You are not pleased to see me, Avdótya Fyódorovna, no more than if I were some sort of insect. [*Sighing.*] Ah! Life! Life!

Dunyásha. What do you want?

Ephikhódof. Undoubtedly perhaps you are right. [*Sighing.*] But of course, if one regards it, so to speak, from the point of view, if I may allow myself the expression, and with apologies for my frankness, you have finally reduced me to a state of mind. I quite appreciate my destiny; every day some misfortune happens to me, and I have long since grown accustomed to it, and face my fortune with a smile. You have passed your word to me, and although I . . .

Dunyásha. Let us talk of this another time, if you please; but now leave me in peace. I am busy meditating. [*Playing with her fan.*]

Ephikhódof. Every day some misfortune befalls me, and yet if I may venture to say so, I meet them with smiles and even laughter.

[*Enter* Barbara *from the drawing-room.*]

Barbara [*to* Ephikhódof]. Haven't you gone yet, Simeon? You seem to pay no attention to what you're told. [*To* Dunyásha.] You get out of here, Dunyásha. [*To* Ephikhódof.] First you play billiards and break a cue, and then you march about the drawing-room as if you were a guest!

Ephikhódof. Allow me to inform you that it's not your place to call me to account.

Barbara. I'm not calling you to account; I'm merely talking to you. All you can do is to walk about from one place to another, without ever doing a stroke of work; and why on earth we keep a clerk at all Heaven only knows.

Ephikhódof [*offended*]. Whether I work, or whether I walk, or whether I eat, or whether I play billiards is a question to be decided only by my elders and people who understand.

Barbara [*furious*]. How dare you talk to me like that! How dare you! I don't understand things, don't I? You clear out of here this minute! Do you hear me? This minute!

Ephikhódof [*flinching*]. I must beg you to express yourself in genteeler language.

Barbara [*beside herself*]. You clear out this instant second! Out you go! [*Following him as he retreats towards the door.*] Twenty-two misfortunes! Make yourself scarce! Get out of my sight! [*Exit* Ephikhódof.]

Ephikhódof [*without*]. I shall lodge a complaint against you.

Barbara. What! You're coming back, are you? [*Seizing the walking-stick left at the door by* FIRS.] Come on! Come on! Come on! I'll teach you! Are you coming? Are you coming? Then take that. [*She slashes with the stick.*]

[*Enter* LOPÁKHIN.]

Lopákhin. Many thanks; much obliged.

Barbara [*still angry, but ironical*]. Sorry!

Lopákhin. Don't mention it. I'm very grateful for your warm reception.

Barbara. It's not worth thanking me for. [*She walks away, then looks round and asks in a gentle voice:*] I didn't hurt you?

Lopákhin. Oh, no, nothing to matter. I shall have a bump like a goose's egg, that's all.

[*Voices from the drawing-room:* "Lopákhin has arrived! Yermolái Alexéyitch!"]

Pishtchik. Let my eyes see him, let my ears hear him! [*He and* LOPÁKHIN *kiss.*] You smell of brandy, old man. We're having a high time, too.

[*Enter* MADAME RANÉVSKY.]

Madame Ranévsky. Is it you, Yermolái Alexéyitch? Why have you been so long? Where is Leoníd?

Lopákhin. Leoníd Andréyitch came back with me. He's just coming.

Madame Ranévsky [*agitated*]. What happened? Did the sale come off? Tell me, tell me!

Lopákhin [*embarrassed, afraid of showing his pleasure*]. The sale was all over by four o'clock. We missed the train and had to wait till half-past eight. [*Sighing heavily.*] Ouf! I'm rather giddy. . . .

[*Enter* GÁYEF. *In one hand he carries parcels; with the other he wipes away his tears.*]

Madame Ranévsky. What happened, Lénya? Come, Lénya! [*Impatiently, crying.*] Be quick, be quick, for Heaven's sake!

Gáyef [*answering her only with an up-and-down gesture of the hand; to* FIRS, *crying*]. Here take these. . . . Here are some anchovies and Black Sea herrings. I've had nothing to eat all day. Lord, what I've been through! [*Through the open door of the billiard-room comes the click of the billiard balls and* YÁSHA'S *voice:* "Seven, eighteen!" GÁYEF'S *expression changes; he stops crying.*] I'm frightfully tired. Come and help me change, Firs. [*He goes up through the drawing-room,* FIRS *following.*]

Pishtchik. What about the sale? Come on, tell us all about it.

Madame Ranévsky. Was the cherry orchard sold?

Lopákhin. Yes.

Madame Ranévsky. Who bought it?

Lopákhin. I did. [*A pause.* MADAME RANÉVSKY *is overwhelmed at the news. She would fall to the ground but for the chair and table by her.* BARBARA *takes the keys from her belt, throws them on the floor in the middle of the sitting-room, and exit.*] I bought it. Wait a bit; don't hurry me; my head's in a whirl; I can't speak. . . . [*Laughing.*] When we got to the sale, Derigánof was there already. Leoníd Andréyitch had only fifteen hundred pounds, and Derigánof bid three thousand more than the mortgage right away. When I saw how things stood, I went for him and did four thousand. He said four thousand five hundred. I said five thousand five hundred. He went up by five hundreds, you see, and I went up by thousands. . . . Well, it was soon over. I bid nine thousand more than the mortgage, and got it; and now the cherry orchard is mine! Mine! [*Laughing.*] Heavens alive! Just think of it! The cherry orchard is mine! Tell me that I'm drunk; tell me that I'm off my head; tell me that it's all a dream! . . . [*Stamping his feet.*] Don't laugh at me! If only my father and my grandfather could rise from their graves and see the whole affair, how their Yermolái, their flogged and ignorant Yermolái, who used to run about barefooted in the winter, how this same Yermolái had bought a property that hasn't its equal for beauty anywhere in the whole world! I have bought the property where my father and grandfather were slaves, where they weren't even allowed into the kitchen. I'm asleep, it's only a vision, it isn't real. . . . 'Tis the fruit of imagination, wrapped in the mists of ignorance. [*Picking up the keys and smiling affectionately.*] She's thrown down her keys; she wants to show that she's no longer mistress here. . . . [*Jingling them together.*] Well, well, what's the odds? [*The musicians are heard tuning up.*] Hey, musicians, play! I want to hear you. Come, every one, and see Yermolái Lopákhin lay his axe to the cherry orchard, come and see the trees fall down! We'll fill the place with

villas; our grandsons and great-grandsons shall see a new life here. . . . Strike up, music!

[*The band plays.* MADAME RANÉVSKY *sinks into a chair and weeps bitterly.*]

Lopákhin [*reproachfully*]. Oh, why, why didn't you listen to me? You can't put the clock back now, poor dear. [*Crying.*] Oh, that all this were past and over! Oh, that our unhappy topsy-turvy life were changed!

Pishtchik [*taking him by the arm, sotto voce*]. She's crying. Let's go into the drawing-room and leave her alone to . . . Come on.

[*Taking him by the arm, and going up toward the drawing-room.*]

Lopákhin. What's up? Play your best, musicians! Let everything be as I want. [*Ironically.*] Here comes the new squire, the owner of the cherry orchard! [*Knocking up by accident against a table and nearly throwing down the candelabra.*] Never mind, I can pay for everything!

[*Exit with* PÍSHTCHIK. *Nobody remains in the drawing-room or sitting-room except* MADAME RANÉVSKY, *who sits huddled together, weeping bitterly. The band plays softly.*]

[*Enter* ÁNYA *and* TROPHÍMOF *quickly.* ÁNYA *goes to her mother and kneels before her.* TROPHÍMOF *stands in the entry to the drawing-room.*]

Ánya. Mamma! Are you crying, mamma? My dear, good, sweet mamma! Darling, I love you! I bless you! The cherry orchard is sold; it's gone; it's quite true, it's quite true. But don't cry, mamma, you've still got life before you, you've still got your pure and lovely soul. Come with me, darling; come away from here. We'll plant a new garden, still lovelier than this. You will see it and understand, and happiness, deep, tranquil happiness will sink down on your soul, like the sun at eventide, and you'll smile, mamma. Come, darling, come with me!

ACT FOUR

Same scene as Act One. There are no window curtains, no pictures. The little furniture left is stacked in a corner, as if for sale. A feeling of emptiness. By the door to the hall and at the back of the scene are piled portmanteaux, bundles, etc. The door is open and the voices of BARBARA *and* ÁNYA *are audible.*

LOPÁKHIN *stands waiting.* YÁSHA *holds a tray with small tumblers full of champagne.* EPHIKHÓDOF *is tying up a box in the hall. A distant murmur of voices behind the scene; the* PEASANTS *have come to say good-bye.*

Gáyef [*without*]. Thank you, my lads, thank you.

Yásha. The common people have come to say good-bye. I'll tell you what I think, Yermolái Alexéyitch; they're good fellows but rather stupid.

[*The murmur of voices dies away.*]

[*Enter* MADAME RANÉVSKY *and* GÁYEF *from the hall. She is not crying, but she is pale, her face twitches, she cannot speak.*]

Gáyef. You gave them your purse, Lyuba. That was wrong, very wrong!

Madame Ranévsky. I couldn't help it, I couldn't help it!

[*Exeunt both.*]

Lopákhin [*calling after them through the doorway*]. Please come here! Won't you come here? Just a glass to say good-bye. I forgot to bring any from the town, and could only raise one bottle at the station. Come along. [*A pause.*] What, won't you have any? [*Returning from the door.*] If I'd known, I wouldn't have bought it. I shan't have any either. [YÁSHA *sets the tray down carefully on a chair.*] Drink it yourself, Yásha.

Yásha. Here's to our departure! Good luck to them that stay! [*Drinking.*] This isn't real champagne, you take my word for it.

Lopákhin. Sixteen shillings a bottle. [*A pause.*] It's devilish cold in here.

Yásha. The fires weren't lighted to-day; we're all going away. [*He laughs.*]

Lopákhin. What are you laughing for?

Yásha. Just pleasure.

Lopákhin. Here we are in October, but it's as calm and sunny as summer. Good building weather. [*Looking at his watch and speaking off.*] Don't forget that there's only forty-seven minutes before the train goes. You must start for the station in twenty minutes. Make haste.

[*Enter* TROPHÍMOF *in an overcoat, from out of doors.*]

Trophímof. I think it's time we were off. The carriages are round. What the deuce has become of my goloshes? I've lost 'em. [*Calling off.*] Ánya, my goloshes have disappeared. I can't find them anywhere!

Lopákhin. I've got to go to Kharkof. I'll start in the same train with you. I'm going to spend the winter at Kharkof. I've been loafing about all this time with you people, eating my head off for want of work. I can't live without work, I don't know what to do with my hands; they dangle about as if they didn't belong to me.

Trophímof. Well, we're going now, and you'll be able to get back to your beneficent labors.

Lopákhin. Have a glass.

Trophímof. Not for me.

Lopákhin. Well, so you're off to Moscow?

Trophímof. Yes, I'll see them into the town, and go on to Moscow to-morrow.

Lopákhin. Well, well, . . . I suppose the professors haven't started their lectures yet; they're waiting till you arrive.

Trophímof. It's no affair of yours.

Lopákhin. How many years have you been up at the University?

Trophímof. Try and think of some new joke; this one's getting a bit flat. [*Looking for his goloshes.*] Look here, I dare say we shan't meet again, so let me give you a bit of advice as a keepsake: Don't flap your hands about! Get out of the habit of flapping. Building villas, prophesying that villa residents will turn into small freeholders, all that sort of thing is flapping, too. Well, when all's said and done, I like you. You have thin, delicate, artist fingers; you have a delicate artist soul.

Lopákhin [*embracing him*]. Good-bye, old chap. Thank you for everything. Take some money off me for the journey if you want it.

Trophímof. What for? I don't want it.

Lopákhin. But you haven't got any.

Trophímof. Yes, I have. Many thanks. I got some for a translation. Here it is, in my pocket. [*Anxiously.*] I can't find my goloshes anywhere!

Barbara [*from the next room*]. Here, take your garbage away! [*She throws a pair of goloshes on the stage.*]

Trophímof. What are you so cross about, Barbara? Humph! . . . But those aren't *my* goloshes!

Lopákhin. In the spring I sowed three thousand acres of poppy and I have cleared four thousand pounds net profit. When my poppies were in flower, what a picture they made! So you see, I cleared four thousand pounds; and I wanted to lend you a bit because I've got it to spare. What's the good of being stuck up? I'm a peasant. . . . As man to man . . .

Trophímof. Your father was a peasant; mine was a chemist; it doesn't prove anything. [Lopákhin *takes out his pocket-book with paper money.*] Shut up, shut up. . . . If you offered me twenty thousand pounds I would not take it. I am a free man; nothing that you value so highly, all of you, rich and poor, has the smallest power over me; it's like thistledown floating on the wind. I can do without you; I can go past you; I'm strong and proud. Mankind marches forward to the highest truth, to the highest happiness possible on earth, and I march in the foremost ranks.

Lopákhin. Will you get there?

Trophímof. Yes. [*A pause.*] I will get there myself, or I will show others the way.

[*The sound of axes hewing is heard in the distance.*]

Lopákhin. Well, good-bye, old chap; it is time to start. Here we stand swaggering to each other, and life goes by all the time without heeding us. When I work for hours without getting tired, I get easy in my mind and I seem to know why I exist. But God alone knows what most of the people in Russia were born for. . . . Well, who cares? It doesn't affect the circulation of work. They say Leoníd Andréyitch has got a place; he's going to be in a bank and get six hundred pounds a year. . . . He won't sit it out, he's too lazy.

Ánya [*in the doorway*]. Mamma says will you stop them cutting down the orchard till she has gone?

Trophímof. Really, haven't you got tact enough for that? [*Exit by the hall.*]

Lopákhin. Of course, I'll stop them at once.—What fools they are! [*Exit after* Trophímof.]

Ánya. Has Firs been sent to the hospital?

Yásha. I told 'em this morning. They're sure to have sent him.

Ánya [*to* Ephikhódof, *who crosses.*] Simeon Panteléyitch, please find out if Firs has been sent to the hospital.

Yásha [*offended*]. I told George this morning. What's the good of asking a dozen times?

Ephikhódof. Our centenarian friend, in my conclusive opinion, is hardly worth tinkering; it's time he was despatched to his forefathers. I can only say I envy him. [*Putting down a*

portmanteau on a bandbox and crushing it flat.] There you are! I knew how it would be! [*Exit.*]

Yásha [*jeering*]. Twenty-two misfortunes!

Barbara [*without*]. Has Firs been sent to the hospital?

Ánya. Yes.

Barbara. Why didn't they take the note to the doctor?

Ánya. We must send it after them. [*Exit.*]

Barbara [*from the next room*]. Where's Yásha? Tell him his mother is here. She wants to say good-bye to him.

Yásha [*with a gesture of impatience*]. It's enough to try the patience of a saint!

[DUNYÁSHA *has been busying herself with the luggage. Seeing* YÁSHA *alone, she approaches him.*]

Dunyásha. You might just look once at me, Yásha. You are going away, you are leaving me. [*Crying and throwing her arms round his neck.*]

Yásha. What's the good of crying? [*Drinking champagne.*] In six days I shall be back in Paris. To-morrow we take the express, off we go, and that's the last of us! I can hardly believe it's true. *Vive la France!* This place don't suit me. I can't bear it . . . it can't be helped. I have had enough barbarism; I'm fed up. [*Drinking champagne.*] What's the good of crying? You be a good girl, and you'll have no call to cry.

Dunyásha [*powdering her face and looking into a glass*]. Write me a letter from Paris. I've been so fond of you, Yásha, ever so fond! I am a delicate creature, Yásha.

Yásha. Here's somebody coming. [*He busies himself with the luggage, singing under his breath.*]

[*Enter* MADAME RANÉVSKY, GÁYEF, ÁNYA, *and* CHARLOTTE.]

Gáyef. We'll have to be off; it's nearly time. [*Looking at* YÁSHA.] Who is it smells of red herring?

Madame Ranévsky. We must take our seats in ten minutes. [*Looking round the room.*] Good-bye, dear old house; good-bye, grandpapa! When winter is past and spring comes again, you will be here no more; they will have pulled you down. Oh, think of all these walls have seen! [*Kissing* ÁNYA *passionately.*] My treasure, you look radiant, your eyes flash like two diamonds. Are you happy?—very happy?

Ánya. Very, very happy. We're beginning a new life, mamma.

Gáyef [*gayly*]. She's quite right; everything's all right now. Till the cherry orchard was sold we were all agitated and miserable; but once the thing was settled finally and irrevocably, we all calmed down and got jolly again. I'm a bank clerk now; I'm a financier . . . red in the middle! And you, Lyuba, whatever you may say, you're looking ever so much better, not a doubt about it.

Madame Ranévsky. Yes, my nerves are better; it's quite true. [*She is helped on with her hat and coat.*] I sleep well now. Take my things out, Yásha. We must be off. [*To* ÁNYA.] We shall soon meet again, darling. . . . I'm off to Paris; I shall live on the money your grandmother sent from Yaroslav to buy the property. God bless your grandmother! I'm afraid it won't last long.

Ánya. You'll come back very, very soon, won't you, mamma? I'm going to work and pass the examination at the Gymnase and get a place and help you. We'll read all sorts of books together, won't we, mamma? [*Kissing her mother's hands.*] We'll read in the long autumn evenings, we'll read heaps of books, and a new, wonderful world will open up before us. [*Meditating.*] . . . Come back, mamma!

Madame Ranévsky. I'll come back, my angel. [*Embracing her.*]

[*Enter* LOPÁKHIN. CHARLOTTE *sings softly.*]

Gáyef. Happy Charlotte, she's singing.

Charlotte [*taking a bundle of rags, like a swaddled baby*]. Hush-a-bye, baby, on the tree-top . . . [*The baby answers,* "Wah, wah."] Hush, my little one, hush, my pretty one! ["Wah, wah."] You'll break your mother's heart. [*She throws the bundle down on the floor again.*] Don't forget to find me a new place, please. I can't do without it.

Lopákhin. We'll find you a place, Charlotte Ivánovna, don't be afraid.

Gáyef. Everybody's deserting us. Barbara's going. Nobody seems to want us.

Charlotte. There's nowhere for me to live in town. I'm obliged to go. [*Hums a tune.*] What's the odds?

[*Enter* PÍSHTCHIK.]

Lopákhin. Nature's masterpiece!

Píshtchik [*panting*]. Oy, oy, let me get my breath again! . . . I'm done up! . . . My noble friends! . . . Give me some water.

Gáyef. Wants some money, I suppose. No, thank you; I'll keep out of harm's way. [*Exit.*]

Pishtchik. It's ages since I have been here, fairest lady. [*To* Lopákhin.] You here? Glad to see you, you man of gigantic intellect. Take this; it's for you. [*Giving* Lopákhin *money.*] Forty pounds! I still owe you eighty-four.

Lopákhin [*amazed, shrugging his shoulders*]. It's like a thing in a dream! Where did you get it from?

Pishtchik. Wait a bit. . . . I'm hot. . . . A most remarkable thing! Some Englishmen came and found some sort of white clay on my land. [*To* Madame Ranévsky.] And here's forty pounds for you, lovely, wonderful lady. [*Giving her money.*] The rest another time. [*Drinking water.*] Only just now a young man in the train was saying that some . . . some great philosopher advises us all to jump off roofs. . . . Jump, he says, and there's an end of it. [*With an astonished air.*] Just think of that! More water!

Lopákhin. Who were the Englishmen?

Pishtchik. I leased them the plot with the clay on it for twenty-four years. But I haven't any time now . . . I must be getting on. I must go to Znoikof's, to Kardamónof's. . . . I owe everybody money. [*Drinking.*] Good-bye to every one; I'll look in on Thursday.

Madame Ranévsky. We're just moving into town, and to-morrow I go abroad.

Pishtchik. What! [*Alarmed.*] What are you going into town for? Why, what's happened to the furniture? . . . Trunks? . . . Oh, it's all right. [*Crying.*] It's all right. People of powerful intellect . . . those Englishmen. It's all right. Be happy . . . God be with you . . . it's all right. Everything in this world has to come to an end. [*Kissing* Madame Ranévsky's *hand.*] If ever the news reaches you that *I* have come to an end, give a thought to the old . . . horse, and say, "Once there lived a certain Simeónof-Píshtchik, Heaven rest his soul." . . . Remarkable weather we're having. . . . Yes. . . . [*Goes out deeply moved. Returns at once and says from the doorway:*] Dáshenka sent her compliments. [*Exit.*]

Madame Ranévsky. Now we can go. I have only two things on my mind. One is poor old Firs. [*Looking at her watch.*] We can still stay five minutes.

Ánya. Firs has been sent to the hospital already, mamma. Yásha sent him off this morning.

Madame Ranévsky. My second anxiety is Barbara. She's used to getting up early and working, and now that she has no work to do she's like a fish out of water. She has grown thin and pale and taken to crying, poor dear. . . . [*A pause.*] You know very well, Yermolái Alexéyitch, I always hoped . . . to see her married to you, and as far as I can see, you're looking out for a wife. [*She whispers to* Ánya, *who nods to* Charlotte, *and both exeunt.*] She loves you; you like her; and I can't make out why you seem to fight shy of each other. I don't understand it.

Lopákhin. I don't understand it either, to tell you the truth. It all seems so odd. If there's still time I'll do it this moment. Let's get it over and have done with it; without you there, I feel as if I should never propose to her.

Madame Ranévsky. A capital idea! After all, it doesn't take more than a minute. I'll call her at once.

Lopákhin. And here's the champagne all ready. [*Looking at the glasses.*] Empty; some one's drunk it. [Yásha *coughs.*] That's what they call lapping it up and no mistake!

Madame Ranévsky [*animated*]. Capital! We'll all go away. . . . *Allez*, Yásha. I'll call her. [*At the door.*] Barbara, leave all that and come here. Come along!

[*Exeunt* Madame Ranévsky *and* Yásha.]

Lopákhin [*looking at his watch*]. Yes.

[*A pause. A stifled laugh behind the door; whispering; at last enter* Barbara.]

Barbara [*examining the luggage*]. Very odd; I can't find it anywhere . . .

Lopákhin. What are you looking for?

Barbara. I packed it myself, and can't remember. [*A pause.*]

Lopákhin. Where are you going to-day, Varvára Mikháilovna?

Barbara. Me? I'm going to the Ragulins. I'm engaged to go and keep house for them, to be housekeeper or whatever it is.

Lopákhin. Oh, at Yáshnevo? That's about fifty miles from here. [*A pause.*] Well, so life in this house is over now.

Barbara [*looking at the luggage*]. Wherever can it be? Perhaps I put it in the trunk. . . . Yes, life here is over now; there won't be any more . . .

Lopákhin. And I'm off to Kharkof at once . . . by the same train. A lot of business to do. I'm leaving Ephikhódof to look after this place. I've taken him on.

Barbara. Have you?

Lopákhin. At this time last year snow was falling already, if you remember; but now it's fine and sunny. Still, it's cold for all that. Three degrees of frost.

Barbara. Were there? I didn't look. [*A pause.*] Besides, the thermometer's broken. [*A pause.*]

A Voice [*at the outer door*]. Yermolái Alexéyitch!

Lopákhin [*as if he had only been waiting to be called*]. I'm just coming! [*Exit quickly.*]

[BARBARA *sits on the floor, puts her head on a bundle and sobs softly. The door opens and* MADAME RANÉVSKY *comes in cautiously.*]

Madame Ranévsky. Well? [*A pause.*] We must be off.

Barbara [*no longer crying, wiping her eyes*]. Yes, it's time, mamma. I shall get to the Ragulins all right to-day, so long as I don't miss the train.

Madame Ranévsky [*calling off*]. Put on your things, Ánya.

[*Enter* ÁNYA, *then* GÁYEF *and* CHARLOTTE. GÁYEF *wears a warm overcoat with a hood. The servants and drivers come in.* EPHIKHÓDOF *busies himself about the luggage.*]

Madame Ranévsky. Now we can start on our journey.

ÁNYA [*delighted*]. We can start on our journey!

Gáyef. My friends, my dear, beloved friends! Now that I am leaving this house forever, can I keep silence? Can I refrain from expressing those emotions which fill my whole being at such a moment?

Ánya [*pleadingly*]. Uncle!

Barbara. Uncle, what's the good?

Gáyef [*sadly*]. Double the red in the middle pocket. I'll hold my tongue.

[*Enter* TROPHÍMOF, *then* LOPÁKHIN.]

Trophímof. Come along, it's time to start.

Lopákhin. Ephikhódof, my coat.

Madame Ranévsky. I must sit here another minute. It's just as if I had never noticed before what the walls and ceilings of the house were like. I look at them hungrily, with such tender love . . .

Gáyef. I remember, when I was six years old, how I sat in this window on Trinity Sunday, and watched father starting out for church.

Madame Ranévsky. Has everything been cleared out?

Lopákhin. Apparently everything. [*To* EPHIKHÓDOF, *putting on his overcoat.*] See that everything's in order, Ephikhódof.

Ephikhódof [*in a hoarse voice*]. You trust me, Yermolái Alexéyitch.

Lopákhin. What's up with your voice?

Ephikhódof. I was just having a drink of water. I swallowed something.

Yásha [*contemptuously*]. Cad!

Madame Ranévsky. We're going, and not a soul will be left here.

Lopákhin. Until the spring.

[BARBARA *pulls an umbrella out of a bundle of rugs, as if she were brandishing it to strike.* LOPÁKHIN *pretends to be frightened.*]

Barbara. Don't be so silly! I never thought of such a thing.

Trophímof. Come, we'd better go and get in. It's time to start. The train will be in immediately.

Barbara. There are your goloshes, Peter, by that portmanteau. [*Crying.*] What dirty old things they are!

Trophímof [*putting on his goloshes*]. Come along.

Gáyef [*much moved, afraid of crying*]. The train . . . the station . . . double the red in the middle; doublette to pot the white in the corner.[1] . . .

Madame Ranévsky. Come on!

Lopákhin. Is every one here? No one left in there? [*Locking the door.*] There are things stacked in there; I must lock them up. Come on!

Ánya. Good-bye, house! Good-bye, old life!

Trophimof. Welcome, new life! [*Exit with* ÁNYA. BARBARA *looks round the room, and exit slowly. Exeunt* YÁSHA *and* CHARLOTTE *with her dog.*]

Lopákhin. Till the spring, then. Go on, everybody. So-long! [*Exit.*]

[MADAME RANÉVSKY *and* GÁYEF *remain alone. They seem to have been waiting for this, throw their arms round*

[1] If you make your ball hit the cushion and run across into a pocket, it is a double; if I hit the cushion myself and pot you on the rebound, it is a doublette.

each other's necks and sob restrainedly and gently, afraid of being overheard.]

Gáyef [*in despair*]. My sister! my sister!

Madame Ranévsky. Oh, my dear, sweet, lovely orchard! My life, my youth, my happiness, farewell! Farewell!

Ánya [*calling gayly, without*]. Mamma!

Trophímof [*gay and excited*]. Aoo!

Madame Ranévsky. One last look at the walls and the windows. . . . Our dear mother used to love to walk up and down this room.

Gáyef. My sister! my sister!

Ánya [*without*]. Mamma!

Trophímof [*without*]. Aoo!

Madame Ranévsky. We're coming.

[*Exeunt. The stage is empty. One hears all the doors being locked, and the carriages driving away. All is quiet. Amid the silence the thud of the axes on the trees echoes sad and lonely. The sound of footsteps.* Firs *appears in the doorway, right. He is dressed, as always, in his long coat and white waistcoat; he wears slippers. He is ill.*]

Firs [*going to the door, left, and trying the handle*]. Locked. They've gone. [*Sitting on the sofa.*] They've forgotten me. Never mind! I'll sit here. Leoníd Andréyitch is sure to put on his cloth coat instead of his fur. [*He sighs anxiously.*] He hadn't me to see. Young wood, green wood! [*He mumbles something incomprehensible.*] Life has gone by as if I'd never lived. [*Lying down.*] I'll lie down. There's no strength left in you; there's nothing, nothing. Ah, you . . . jobbot!

[*He lies motionless. A distant sound is heard, as if from the sky, the sound of a string breaking, dying away, melancholy. Silence ensues, broken only by the stroke of the axe on the trees far away in the cherry orchard.*]

THE END

S. S. TENACITY

(LE PAQUEBOT TENACITY)

By CHARLES VILDRAC

Translated from the French

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CHARLES VILDRAC AND HIS PLAYS

Charles Vildrac, the author of *S. S. Tenacity,* was born in 1882 in provincial France, but for almost twenty-five years has lived in Paris. Although best known as a dramatist, he has actively participated in various social and art movements and still directs the art establishment known as the Galleric Vildrac. Though in a way a Parisian of the Parisians, he possesses the rare gift of detaching himself from his environment and projecting himself into scenes and interests utterly remote from the capital. There is nothing of Parisian flavor about his plays. Another remarkable fact about him is that his great reputation is founded upon only two small volumes of verse, a book of prose sketches, and four plays. Of the plays, *S. S. Tenacity* is by general consent the most significant. Vildrac's plays as a whole, and his masterpiece in particular, are representative of a new kind of drama that has arisen in France since the World War.

This new drama is so entirely unlike that of French tradition that it is scarcely recognizable as "French". It is in part, perhaps, the result of recent foreign influence and in part the result of a new spirit born within France itself. For centuries French dramatists have seemingly felt little need of imitating the dramatists of foreign countries, and, indeed, have shown themselves almost strangely impervious to foreign influences. But a change has come recently. Not that the old traditional subject-matter and technique have been discarded, but that several younger dramatists of undoubted originality and power have taken a new point of view, considered a new body of subject-matter and practiced a new technique. Among these dramatists are Vildrac, Duhamel, Claudel, Jean Jacques Bernard, Romains, Serment, and Lenormand. However unlike they may be individually, all seem to strive for three qualities—truthfulness, simplicity, and sincerity. The old "eternal triangle" has either been discarded by them or has been treated from an angle entirely new. Their scene is less often in Paris than in the country or the small towns. Their characters are less of the socially sophisticated class than of the bourgeois and the peasantry. Their technique is less "theatrical", less rigid, less bound by convention. Their plays, for all their individual differences, stand equally apart from the "thesis" drama of Hervieu and Brieux, the brilliant social comedy and drama of Capus, Donnay, Porto-Riche, Bataille, and others of their kind, and from the romantic-poetic drama of Rostand.

All this holds true especially of the plays of Vildrac. They embody honestly, without comment, and for what it may be worth, the very essence of the simple life of simple persons. Vildrac sees clearly, and is sympathetic without being at all sentimental. He presents ordinary characters who are not so much to be either loved or hated as to be understood and tolerated. His persons are animated by elemental emotions that manifest themselves not violently but in the commonplace acts of every-day living. The simplicity of subject-matter is matched by that of technique, which discards all tricks, takes no account of theatrical "strong scenes," "climaxes," and "curtains," and actually seems to be a natural growth out of the subject-matter itself. It makes no use of "plot," though it presents a definite and mounting action, carefully evolved and guided, and flowing quietly to an inevitable conclusion. Yet, for all its seeming naturalness, this simple technique is really the best and subtlest "theatre," since by means of its apparent artlessness,—by the consummate art that conceals art,—Vildrac actually obtains stage effects that might be envied by the best masters of the craft.

In all respects *S. S. Tenacity* is characteristic of Vildrac's dramaturgy. It has been termed by many critics the best and most representative play of the new drama in France. First produced by Jacques Copeau at his Vieux Colombier theatre in Paris, on March 6, 1920, it has been frequently revived and has continued to be the favorite play in the Vieux Colombier repertory. The first production of the play in America was in New York on January 2, 1922, after which date it was revived by the Neighborhood Playhouse in the same city.

CHARACTERS

Thérèse, *Barmaid at the Restaurant Cordier, 22 years old*
The Widow Cordier, *55*
Bastien, *29*
Ségard, *26*
Hidoux, *60*
An English Sailor
A Young Workman
Workmen and Sailors

The action takes place in France in the present day.

S. S. TENACITY

ACT ONE

A little restaurant in a seaboard town, the sort of place frequented by workmen. At the back the windows and door are open and the view is on a harbor filled with ships. On the left the bar, and behind the bar a door. Another door in the same position on the right. The room is furnished with tables and benches at which workingmen are eating. It is by this second door that THERESE *serves the customers.*

HIDOUX, *half drunk, leans on the bar, his glass before him. He is talking alternately to* MME. CORDIER *and to the assembly.*

Hidoux. Look here, Mme. Cordier. What's your idea? Is that the way it ought to be? Suppose you take all these boys here who make their twelve francs . . . yes . . . say, their twelve francs . . . [*He interrupts himself and points to a young man at one of the nearer tables.*] Eh, young man, how much do you make?

Young Workman. Me? I make twelve francs fifty.

Hidoux. All right . . . say, their twelve francs fifty a day. Take the lot of them, Mme. Cordier, who make their twelve francs fifty a day, hoisting steel rails for the tramway from morning to night. That's hard work. It wears out your hands and your arms and your shoulders and your back. Am I right? [*This last to the assembly, which agrees.*] Hm? Good! . . . . Now then . . . take me . . . just between us, I'm not what you call a professional worker. [*Laughter.*] But wait . . . Just wait . . . Here's a sewer-pipe . . . bursts in front of the Desbrosses house and floods the cellar. I get fifteen francs a day for bailing the cellar out. The job's done in two days. . . . Huh! . . . Don't think I enjoyed it. But I get my thirty francs at the window and who should come along but Desbrosses himself. I hadn't even washed up. . . . God! You'd have thought they had just dredged me up from the bottom of the harbor. He looks me over. Then he goes along with me to look over my job and he gives me . . . like that . . . fifty francs extra for a tip. Two days of work—eighty francs! I'm not complaining. Naturally I'm not. You understand that, but after all, Mme. Cordier—just between us—is that the way it ought to be?

Mme. Cordier. This makes ten times you've told me.

Hidoux. [*Finishing his drink.*] What will you take, Mme. Cordier? The same for me.

Mme. Cordier. How soon are you going to eat?

Hidoux. And it's the same story when an American comes off the steamer here. I carry his valise and he gives me five francs . . . five francs! . . . In fifteen minutes! I know. You call it luck. All right. But just the same, tell me this . . . five francs in fifteen minutes . . . honestly, is that the way it ought to go? When my comrades here . . .Workingmen like me . . . remember that . . . like me . . . .

Therese. [*Who has entered.*] Hey, old boy, yesterday I made five francs, too.

Hidoux. Oh, as to women, that's another matter. Whoever gave you five francs?

Therese. You did. He doesn't even remember. What time was it you got through with your cellar?

Hidoux. Seven o'clock.

Therese. That's right, and by nine you were drunk—drunk as a lord—and you had never bothered to wash up yet.

Hidoux. Now suppose . . . .

Therese. And you came in here . . . Ah! La! La!

Hidoux. Now suppose I had washed up before I went for my pay . . . suppose I hadn't stunk or suppose M. Desbrosses didn't have the kind of heart that rises above a stink. Well, I wouldn't have got my fifty francs, would I? When you think that riches . . .

Mme. Cordier. [*Interrupting, indicates* THERESE.] Hidoux . . . she's the one who . . .

Hidoux. When you think that riches can depend on such trifles . . . I ask you now, is that the way things ought to be?

Mme. Cordier. She's the one . . . Therese . . . she had pity on you. She took your

jacket off and cleaned it up and washed your face and hands for you.

Hidoux. [*To* THERESE.] And did I give you five francs? . . .

Therese. Yes, you did . . . and I didn't ask you for them, either. I made sure you knew what you were about, giving them to me like that. I yelled in your ear: "Eh, Hidoux, you're giving me five francs. Do you know what you're doing?" Because Madame will tell you . . . I play fair with people, even when they're drunk.

Hidoux. You have a drink with me. Just a little lady's liqueur.

[BASTIEN *and* SÉGARD *enter, laden with light baggage.*]

Bastien. [*To* THERESE *who has come forward.*] Say, Mademoiselle . . . can we eat here?

Therese. [*Pointing out a table on the right beside the bar.*] Certainly. Sit down at that table.

[*They sit.* THERESE *arranges the places and serves during the following. There is a silence.*]

Hidoux. [*Lurches toward the table.*] Aha! We have travelers with us. Good morning, gentlemen. Did you have a good crossing? I suppose you've come by the boat from England.

Bastien. [*Smiling.*] Not us.

Segard. We come from Paris.

Mme. Cordier. From Paris? It's warm traveling these days, isn't it?

Bastien. Warm and thirsty. Mademoiselle, what we want most is wine.

Hidoux. Well then, you are . . . Parisians.

Bastien. Right again.

Hidoux. Bravo! Put it there! That's the hand of a man who—such as you see him—has been a Parisian in his day, too. That's the hand of a man who lived six years at No. 54 in the rue St. Maur. That ought to mean something to you.

Bastien. Sure! I know that part of town. We hail from the avenue de Clichy, we do.

Segard. Ah! Ask me if I know the rue St. Maur! When I was a boy I went there for my vacations—to my aunt's. She was a laundress—No. 28. Ah . . . the rue St. Maur!

Hidoux. Then you must know No. 54. In those days it was one of those furnished room places, just across from that big iron dealer's.

Segard. Sébillon!

Hidoux. Sébillon! Yes, he was the boss! Now, there was a real Parisian for you. Sébillon! I came near working for him.

Segard. Whole afternoons I have passed watching them load those big iron plates on the trucks at Sébillon's. I can see the men now and all their little aprons red with rust and their throats like copper and their hands —the hands of redskins.

Hidoux. That's *right!*

Segard. They would swing up a big sheet of iron—six and eight of them together—and send it crashing on the others, and when it landed and when it landed—flat—Ah, that was the best of it—it was just like thunder.

Hidoux. Um . . . . these dirty lubbers always spoiled my nap in the afternoon.

Segard. Ah, that's far away . . . all that . . . . that's far away. [*To* BASTIEN.] It will be further yet.

Hidoux. I'm talking about fifteen years ago.

Bastien. Oh, forget that stuff . . . you'll have time enough to remember it all when you're sixty.

Hidoux. But . . . eh, Therese . . . come now, boys . . . you let me buy a drink . . . just one before you eat. . . .

Segard. Oh, no, thanks!

Bastien. Do you mean it?

Hidoux. A little white wine . . . come on . . . Therese, my dear. . . .

Segard. No, thanks.

Therese. [*Serving.*] Don't stop him. He's rich today.

Hidoux. Yes, *sir.* I'm rich today. Look at Therese . . . there's a pretty girl for you. And I want you to know she's a good girl too . . . she's got a kind heart. . . . Last night she took care of me like . . . oh, well . . . what's that to you? [*He sits opposite the two travelers.*] I'm going to eat my lunch too. Here's kindness! [*They drink.*] So then. . . . Now you're after a job here.

Bastien. Not likely.

Hidoux. Oh, I see. So the idea is a pleasant little holiday along the coast.

Bastien. Holiday? That may be. But not along the coast, though.

Hidoux. Well, then, in the country? Visiting relatives?

Therese. I say! He *is* curious!

Hidoux. Gentlemen, she's right. I am. . . . excuse me. . . I am. . . . too curious altogether.

Segard. Oh, no!

Hidoux. Excuse me. What's true is true. You can't deny it. But there's no harm meant.

Bastien. And no harm done, old boy. Only we're not for visiting relatives and we're not going into the country.

Hidoux. [*Dignified.*] It's nothing to me. I don't want to know—

Segard. We've no reason why we shouldn't tell where we're going. In fact we've got to tell. We want information.

[THERESE *listens curiously.*]

Bastien. [*Triumphantly and with great effect.*] We can tell the world about it. We can shout it all over town. Tomorrow we sail for the other end of the earth.

Hidoux. Aha! Now, *that's* a different matter.

Therese. For where?

Segard. [*A little moved.*] For Canada.

Bastien. M-hm. For the furthest depths of Canada.

Mme. Cordier. [*Comes from the bar and stands near them.*] I daresay you're going to try your trade out there?

Bastien. [*Emphatically.*] Our trade, Madame! Do you think they've left us any time for a trade? What I mean is: We've pretty well forgotten whatever trade we knew. We're just through with the war. That's been our trade. Six years we've worked in barracks and on the Meuse and on the Marne and the Somme. All those sweet workshops of the government. Yes, *sir!* That's the boss we've been longest with! Ever since our apprentice days.

[*Laughter. Some of the workmen approach, smoking. A brief silence.*]

No, Madame, *not* our trade! What I said to my friend was just this: Yesterday, it was war. Today the war's got to be paid for. Tomorrow it'll be something else. Anyway you look at it, you're always going to get it in the neck here. If you want to be left alone, go to a country where you're a stranger. That's my idea. And then, what I told him: You're lucky enough to pull out for four years of war with a whole skin. Four years, not counting three years of service before and ten months in barracks afterwards. Now, then, you don't see yourself going back just like nothing hadn't happened—going back like on a Monday after a fine Sunday in the country—going back into a cellar on the Rue Montmartre to spend your nights setting up their stinking newspapers . . . We're typesetters, you see . . . Huh! Not likely! . . . And what I told him: We clear out of here . . . We clear out where they can't get their hands on us again . . . We clear out and live like free men in the open air. Colonize the new world, that's my idea. Eh, Alfred?

Segard. Yes.

Hidoux. Bravo! You're right, too. Now, I do odd jobs on the water front. I'm your man, whenever you want strength. Mme. Cordier can tell you I'm a long way from complaining. [*He turns to her.*] Eh? How about yesterday? Good! But if I had my life to live over again, I don't say that . . . But just the same, America's pretty well filled up; already before the war . . .

Bastien. Filled up? Well, that depends what part of America. . . . Believe me, I'm not talking about the United States. I'm not talking about New York. Get this right. We're going to Canada. Canada's as big as Europe . . . with Russia too, and all that country hasn't as many inhabitants as Paris and London. In Canada you get Esquimaux in the North, and in the South you get negroes and redskins. And you see, it's very simple. We get off in Montreal, and do you know how many kilometers we have to go before we get settled? Two thousand! Two thousand kilometers!

Mme. Cordier. On foot?

Bastien. No . . . in the train. Two thousand kilometers in the train. Do you get that? Through country where you see nothing but wheat . . . just wheat . . . everywhere. Or else prairies and herds of cattle with men like Buffalo Bill. Oh, and you see lakes . . . lakes that are as big as all France.

Hidoux. [*Skeptically.*] Oh! As big as all France!

Bastien. Yes, *sir!* As big as all France! Why I could show you a book we got about the country. It's in the valise there. How about it, Alfred? I tell you we're not going to the civilized part of Canada. We're headed for Manitoba, if you want to know—for the furthest depths of Manitoba. So you see! We know what we're up to. You can bet on this much—there's plenty of work out where we're going for veterans of the war who want to be left alone. Besides, they've made us propositions.

Therese. If you soldiers all go away, what's to become of us women?

Segard. I'll take you along, Mademoiselle.

[THERESE *goes to lean on the table near* SEGARD *and jokes with him.*]

Young Workman. [*To* BASTIEN.] They've made you propositions?

Bastien. Sure they have! That is . . . well . . . there's a French-English Company. You sign a contract with them, and they pay your way to Canada. It's a farming scheme. You work a year and get wages . . . that's to learn cattle breeding and farming and to get on to the way of things. After a year they give you land and build you a house and there you are . . . fixed. And you have ten years to pay up for your property. Naturally, you pay interest all that time and you pay a little here and there to rent agricultural machines. You don't have to buy a thing. The whole business doesn't cost half what they soak you for rent in Paris.

Mme. Cordier. Suppose the farmer's life doesn't appeal to you after you've had a year of it?

Bastien. You're free. You let the whole thing go. Only you pay the company a forfeit of 600 francs. It's no more than right to pay 'em back the cost of your trip and all the other things. They're paid for that already because they have held back out of your wages. If you go on, they give it back to you, and you have something to buy a piano for your château.

Hidoux. That's certainly a good scheme.

[*Approving murmurs.*]

Bastien. Everything's all fixed. You can't beat it.

Therese. Aren't you afraid you'll have enough of it when the year's up?

Bastien. Say, what do you take us for—a couple of children? We've been looking the facts in the eye. We know it's going to be hard at first. Sure we do! But after the war—is anything hard? It just takes a little guts. When I start for something, believe me, I get to it. We're men of decision, aren't we, Alfred?

Segard. [*Faintly.*] Yes, oh yes.

Bastien. [*Indicating* SEGARD.] If he was alone in this, you know, he'd never stick it out, but with me along. . . .

Segard. Why do you say that?

Bastien. No offense, old boy. You've got to admit our characters are different. You care a lot more than I do about leaving home and your family and all that truck.

Segard. [*Lightly.*] Oh!

Mme. Cordier. It's nothing to be ashamed of, if you do. Some people are just naturally more affectionate than others. That's all.

Bastien. And then remember this. It was my idea. Me! I'm the one . . . believe me . . . I'm the one who made up his mind for him and dragged him off. Why, you might say I had to drag him by the arm and make him come.

Segard. [*Smiling.*] You aren't dragging me on board by force.

Bastien. No, of course I'm not. All I say is you would never have done it alone.

Segard. O, I grant you that.

Bastien. Well! Me! I guess I'd have gone alone. [*Another silence.*]

Therese. So you sail tomorrow?

Bastien. Yes, my dear, tomorrow.

Segard. Yes, tomorrow. We must go find out about the hours.

Hidoux. What's the ship?

Bastien. It's a ship with a name just made for us—a name that can't be beat . . . we could take it for our motto, eh, Alfred? It's the Tenacity.

Hidoux. The Tenacity? I've seen her. Belongs to the Translantic Line, doesn't she?

Bastien. [*He pulls some papers out of his pocket.*] No. [*He reads.*] Smith, Walter & Sons Co., of Montreal. We better look it up pretty quick.

Hidoux. She's in the second basin on the right. I'll take you there. [*Connoisseur.*] She's a boat that must draw . . . well, let's say. . . .

Segard. Where do we sleep tonight?

Mme. Cordier. Sleep here if you like. I have rooms.

Hidoux. You couldn't find a better berth. If you're drunk tonight . . . just suppose . . . here's Therese all ready to clean you up.

Therese. Go on! Do you think these gentlemen . . .

Bastien. [*Rises.*] Well then, that's that, Madame. We sleep here. Now I'm going to buy a round. Everybody! To the steamship Tenacity of Montreal! Cognac, Mlle. Therese or. . . . [*Gesture to the room.*] Whatever you like.

Hidoux. That's an idea.

[THERESE *serves.*]

Bastien. Ten years from now we'll be coming back this way. You better have some good stuff on tap for us then, Madame.

Segard. Ten years—or more, perhaps.

Bastien. And maybe less. Here's your good health, Madame.

Mme. Cordier. And a good voyage to you!

Therese. Here's to your sweethearts out yonder.

Bastien. When we want sweethearts, I'm thinking we'll be coming after you.

Segard. We can't hope to find any like you in Canada.

Therese. [*A little curtsey.*] You don't mean that!

Hidoux. [*He has turned toward the door at the back. Suddenly he sets down his glass and rushes out crying.*] Hep! Hep!

[*They all follow him with their eyes. He comes back almost at once, immediately followed by a sailor.*]

Here's a sailor from your good ship, Tenacity.

English Sailor. [*Cockney.*] Mornin'!

Bastien. So you belong to the steamer Tenacity.

English Sailor. Tenacity? Yes.

Bastien. Say, that's fine. How about a drink with us? [*Motions to* THERESE.] Here's my friend and me on our way to Canada on the Tenacity.

English Sailor. Well, that's all right.

[THERESE *serves him.*]

Hidoux. He's the man to tell you all about it. You see, mate, these gentlemen want to know what time the boat sails tomorrow.

English Sailor. What time?

Hidoux. Yes.

English Sailor. The Tenacity?

Bastien. Yes, we'd be much obliged to you if . . .

English Sailor. But she don't sail tomorrow.

Bastien. What?

Segard. We've got our tickets to sail tomorrow.

English Sailor. Just the same, she don't sail tomorrow. She was due to sail tomorrow right enough, but she won't sail tomorrow, not with 'er boilers, she won't.

Bastien. Ah!

English Sailor. 'Ere's kindness. [*He drinks.*]

Segard. Here's to you. Then we've got to wait here an extra day or two?

Bastien. Are they working on the boilers now?

English Sailor. They're workin' on 'em right enough. They've got to take 'em out.

Bastien. Take 'em out! How long do you think it will be?

English Sailor. Maybe a couple o' weeks.

Bastien. No!

Segard. Two weeks!

English Sailor. Just that . . . or maybe a bit more.

Hidoux. You haven't gone yet, boys. You've got time enough to sit down again.

Bastien. [*Discouraged, sits.*] But you can't make passengers wait two weeks. There ought to be another steamer.

English Sailor. There ain't. We don't have many passengers on the Tenacity. It's that way. There might be four and again there might be ten. We bring out cattle and we take back wire. Go awsk for yourself at the company's office. But I'm tellin' you straight. It may be a month from now before there's any other boat for Canada than the Tenacity. I've got to be runnin' along. See you on board one o' these days. Mornin'.

Bastien. Thanks. We'll come on board.

[ENGLISH SAILOR *goes.* *A silence.*]

Segard. Well. . . .

Bastien. We've got to look around first. But the chances are he knows what he's talking about.

Hidoux. Oh, you couldn't say he was drunk.

Segard. Whatever happens, the company's got to see to it that we get off or buy us a round trip to Paris so that we can go home and wait for them to fix their boilers . . . just as if the sailing hadn't been for tomorrow.

Mme. Cordier. Of course the company will have to pay.

Bastien. [*Thoughtfully.*] How's that? Go wait at home? If there isn't any other boat, that's just the thing they'll propose to us.

Segard. And it's the wisest thing, too.

[*A silence.*]

Bastien. No, Alfred! It can't be done. Go back for two weeks to Paris . . . go through all our goodbyes again . . . get ready to start again . . . go to the station with all our sisters and mothers crying their eyes out again. Not for mine.

Segard. I know . . . but just the same . . .

Bastien. We had enough of that stuff last week. Everybody said goodbye to us—we said goodbye to everybody—we can't go back—it would be bad luck.

Segard. Yes, I know; but it would be best, just the same.

Bastien. Well . . . spit it out . . .

Segard. Just the same . . . living here. . . it's going to make a hole in our savings, you know.

Bastien. No, I *don't* know. Look here! Have you got any printers in this town?

Hidoux. Sure, we've got printers.

Mme. Cordier. There's no lack of them.

Hidoux. And listen to me, printers or not, there's plenty of work in this town. There's the tramway building on the docks. They take men on by the day . . . hoisting rails . . . all the men they can get . . . twelve francs fifty a day. I don't mind saying that if I didn't have better work myself and more than I can handle . . . well . . . a day now and then . . . why, it's not a bad job that. . .

Segard. If we could fix things up with Madame, we could live and eat here.

Therese. Sure you could.

Mme. Cordier. I'm not one to boast, but if you stay your two weeks here, you'll have a good word for the house when you go.

Bastien. [*Rising decisively.*] Let's get to the boat first.

Segard. [*Rising.*] We'll see the printers later . . . if they can take us on. [*He examines the restaurant, looking about him. He looks at* THERESE.] Lord! It wouldn't be so bad. Two weeks here before America!

Therese. Almost like being at home still.

Segard. Yes. It won't be so sudden.

Bastien. [*Goes toward the door with* HIDOUX. *Calls* SEGARD.] Coming? [*He goes out and stops just outside the door, talking with* HIDOUX.]

Segard. [*To* THERESE.] You know, I like to stay in a place long enough, anyway, to feel at home. I like to get used to the people so I can remember them, afterwards. I like to feel that I belong there . . . any place where I have been.

Therese. [*She bends over the flower* SEGARD *wears in his buttonhole.*] That's a pretty flower you're wearing. Did your sweetheart give it to you?

Segard. No. When I left home, I picked it in the garden.

Bastien. [*From outside.*] Come on, Alfred!

Segard. I'm coming! [*He pulls the flower from his buttonhole and offers it to* THERESE, *who takes it. He goes.*]

ACT TWO

SCENE ONE

The same scene as in Act One.

SEGARD *and* THERESE *are near the table on the right.* SEGARD *carries his left arm in a sling.* THERESE *is darning stockings. After a brief silence,* SEGARD *rises and paces back and forth. It is evident that his arm pains him. His free hand twitches with nervousness.*

Therese. Does it hurt you much?

Segard. Now and then it does. In sharp little twinges. It's the flesh throbbing under the nails. It makes me nervous.

Therese. It may go on so for quite a few days. Just the same, you might have left your fingers under that rail. What fools they were! What got them to let go before you did?

Segard. I'm to blame. I didn't let go soon enough. And I had hold wrong—underneath. It's bothersome because I can't work. . . . There's a compensation, though.

Therese. What compensation?

Segard. That I can spend hours on end with Therese.

Therese. Silly!

Segard. No. . . . I'm not silly.

Therese. In a week. . . . on the boat . . . you'll be better off than you are here . . . and happier.

Segard. No.

Therese. It won't be long before I'm forgotten.

Segard. Not by me. My memory holds on to things tight . . . And then. . . .

Therese. My memory's better for places than it is for people. I see so many people.

Segard. I take root too hard. If I'm in a place one day, I feel I'm going to spend all the rest of my life there. When I go away, it's just as if I'd been there always. It's the same with people . . . Ah, during the war. . . .

Therese. You oughtn't to let things get you that way.

Segard. I'm no happier for it. But I wouldn't be any different . . . Listen, Therese . . . Twenty years from now . . . if I come to this town on the train—just as I came this time—I may not remember anything about the station; I may not know how to find my way to this house. Perhaps I won't be able to find it at all again. But in my mind—I'm sure—I'll see this room with all its tables in

place . . . then, just like now. I'll see Madame Cordier at her bar figuring in her book and Therese lifting Hidoux's glass with one hand so she can wipe off the bare table with the other. I'll remember that afternoon—day before yesterday—and me reading here . . . and you ironing napkins, you and Madame. And yesterday when you went out to buy your little yellow shoes and how you showed them to me and how I made you try them on. And today—I'll remember that, too, Therese. I'll see you just as you are, bent over your darning . . . Ah, I won't have forgotten the things I've looked at so often . . . the something I'm looking at now.

Therese. [*Without lifting her eyes from her work.*] What are you looking at now?

Segard. At the way your hair lies in little curls on your neck.

Therese. [*Throws her head back with a laugh.*] And I was listening to you seriously!

Segard. I'm not joking. I'll be remembering all that ten years from now and many more things, too.

Therese. Ten years from now!

Segard. Listen. When I was a child, one vacation, I spent a month in the country at a summer school. That's one of my most beautiful memories. We ate in a big white refectory. It smelled so good! It smelled like a dairy and a bakery together! The tables were covered with shiny white oilcloth. It smelled of new oilcloth, too. I shan't ever forget the smell of the refectory. Why, when I think of that vacation, the smell comes back to me—right in my nose—and I see the woman who waited on us . . . Each one of us had a little carafe at his place—a carafe filled with pink water, just colored with red wine.

Therese. [*Laughing.*] Me, too! I had a bottle. I took my lunch to school. I always carried a little bottle of cider. I used to put anything I could find in it to make it taste better . . . a piece of candy . . . some chocolate . . . or a cherry. I used to shake it up till it foamed.

Segard. [*While she speaks he has risen. He takes a few steps and stands facing her.*] Where was your school? Here?

Therese. Yes. At the other end of town. I stayed there 'till I was twelve years old.

Segard. And after that?

Therese. After that I went to work for a family in the country. They had a poultry farm. I was well off there, I can tell you! They had a fine garden with strawberries. What strawberries! My mother took me away because I didn't earn enough . . .

Segard. How nicely you fix your hair.

Therese. Do you like it?

Segard. [*Nodding.*] You have pretty hair, too. [*She is pleased. Silence.*]

Therese. I hope you're going to send me some postal cards from Canada.

Segard. Of course I am. If there are none to be had, I'll write you a little letter.

Therese. That's nice. You must keep your promise, though. Because so many of the boys have promised to send me postal cards and candy—like that . . . One of them came here and told me they had a special kind of candy where he lived. I never saw anything of it.

Segard. You can be sure they don't have candy in Canada, Therese. But I'll give you some before I go.

Therese. When are you going? Oh, I'm not asking on account of the candy.

Segard. We don't know yet exactly. In five or six days. Yesterday morning I went to look at the Tenacity. It was raining. A fine drizzle. You'd have said the boat was deserted. Then I thought: how would it be if they hadn't put off the sailing? Then I saw the rain on the ocean, dirty and grey . . . . and the Tenacity nosing through it . . . days and days . . . with its little trail of smoke [*Silence.*] It's a sad thing—rain in a seaport.

Therese. Aren't you glad to be going?

Segard. Yes . . . That is . . . of course, I'm sorry to be leaving here. Oh, once we get out there! You see, I always live in the present. That's my trouble. It's just as if a strong man was pulling a rope through my hands. I grab it, I hold on, even if my hands get skinned. But I can't control the rope, and I'm pulled along with it and shaken all over. Bastien—he's stronger than I am. He can control his life just as he likes. He made up my mind for me, and I like it better that way. I can see another man's plans clear enough. I know when they're good or bad. But I can't even start any for myself. I'm not the kind that makes plans anyway. I can only dream about things. I don't say: "I'll do so and so." What I say is: "It might go like this . . . I might be . . . there. . . . in such a place, and he might be with me or she might, whoever they are; and everything would be so wonderful—you know; I would

be happy. You'll laugh at me, but wherever I am, I tell myself stories that might come true. Only they're always too beautiful. I never dare hope they *will* come true.

Therese. Just the same, you're old enough to know what you want.

Segard. Yes. Oh, I choose what I like the best any place I happen to be in, but the place —I'm not the one who chooses that. Are you?

Therese. Oh, I never thought about such things.

Segard. Out of all the chances that come your way, to find and to choose what you want most . . . I tell you, Therese . . . even that's hard. It's terrible.

Therese. I don't believe you get a choice. You just have to take what comes.

Segard. Oh, yes you do! You get your choice! But I want to take everything and I know so well I'm going to regret the very thing I let slip that I'm miserable beforehand.

Therese. I'm unhappy afterwards. Sometimes it goes that way. Why, yesterday, now, at the last moment, I didn't know which I wanted, the brown shoes or the black patent leathers. I took the brown. They're more in season. But, just the same, those black ones. . . .

Segard. Yes. But I wasn't thinking of things like shoes.

Therese. Of course you weren't.

Segard. Life is all full of funny twists, Therese. I leave Paris for Canada with Bastien. A whole month I hadn't thought of anything but Canada. In the train I saw the boat and then Canada. I made a picture of it in my head. We come here. The boat doesn't sail as we expected. Here I am these two weeks at the hotel Cordier. Now do you suppose I'm like Bastien, thinking only of when we get away? That my eyes, as he says, never leave the mark? No. I . . . well, I look at you. I'm quite happy just being with you. I like the house. I like it . . . and you, too . . . you, too . . .

Therese. [*Lifting her head, laughing.*] Honest?

Segard. I say to myself: look here; you're going away and maybe you might have lived here and been very happy right in this place. Who knows? If you could only . . . Just now you told me how you worked on a poultry farm. Here's the kind I am. Quick as that, my imagination's off. I see a little cottage in the sun, like a porter's lodge; not in Canada. There's a yard for raising chickens and a garden and pretty Therese is laughing there. For you did speak of a garden, didn't you?

Therese. Yes.

Segard. You see how it goes, don't you? You see how hard it is to feel, at every step, that if you only stopped there and stood still you might have everything, to guess how easily you could fill your life and your heart, too . . . full up. . . .

Therese. Yes. All you say is true. [*Silence.*] The little house with the chickens and the flowers . . . Ah, you'll be putting ideas in my head and getting me all upset.

Segard. [*Laying his hand on her shoulder.*] No . . . Oh, no!

Therese. I hear Madame Cordier coming down. It's time to set the tables.

Segard. I guess you've had enough of my stories, Therese.

Therese. Oh, no! You've told me such nice things! [*She begins to set the tables.*]

Mme. Cordier. [*Entering by the door on left.*] Quickly, Therese! It's late. How goes it, Segard?

Segard. Not so bad. The pain keeps up . . . it tires me . . . gives me fever.

Mme. Cordier. You'd better have an early supper and go to bed.

Segard. I don't feel very hungry. [*He sits down.*]

[*Workmen enter and seat themselves at the tables upstage. Then* Hidoux *and* Bastien *come in.*]

Hidoux. [*Continuing his conversation with* Bastien.] No good at all. It's no good to change the form of government. Not as long as men are still what they are. It's like me. What if I were to move my lodgings because my room is a stinking, filthy mess—or "dirty dump." The room I live in—I don't care where, it is—will always be a stinking, filthy mess. Why? Because it's the room of a drunkard. The curtains at my window will always be down. Why? Because I catch hold of them to keep from falling . . . when I need a breath of air. I've always wanted a little green plant in my lodging on the table beside the bed and a book next to it. But I could change the table a dozen times. There'd always be a bottle on it. Maybe a whole load of bottles. Call my case a desperate one if you like, Bastien. But, believe me, this is no drunkard's talk today. Stick to your char-

acter. Improve that and don't be bothering about governments.

Bastien. That's all well and good, only everybody would have to . . .

Hidoux. Exactly. Everybody would have to. But everybody commences with yourself. Hello, Segard! [*He shakes hands with* SEGARD *and moves toward the back to join two new arrivals. Sits down and drinks with them.*]

Segard. Good evening.

Bastien. [*Throws himself in front of* THERESE, *who comes in, both hands full of dishes.*] Good evening, Therese. Aha! No, you don't. Now's the time to see if you're ticklish. [*He pinches her. She cries out.*]

Therese. Stop it, or I'll drop everything.

Mme. Cordier. Let her alone, Bastien. She's late.

Bastien. [*Effaces himself comically.* THERESE *sticks out her tongue at him.* BASTIEN *goes nearer to* SEGARD.] How goes the hand tonight?

Segard. It hurts at times, but last night I couldn't sleep, so I'm very tired.

Bastien. Did you try going out? Did you look around and see how the boat's getting on?

Segard. No. I stayed here.

Bastien. I guess you don't see many people in here between meals.

Segard. Nobody.

Bastien. [*Confidentially.*] Say, have you . . . started anything with Therese?

Segard. [*Without looking at* BASTIEN, *shakes his head. A brief silence. Then.*] Bastien, I'm going up to lie down a while.

Bastien. Oh, I was just asking because . . . well . . . the way I see it . . . if you could get an hour alone with that girl . . . go after her in earnest, you could get anything you like out of her.

Segard. You can't always be sure. [*He rises.*]

Bastien. You're in bad shape, Alfred. Go lie down. We may be leaving in another week. Can't have you sick then.

Segard. Oh, it's nothing.

[*He goes quietly, exchanging a few words with* MME. CORDIER. *At the back* HIDOUX *empties his glass and shakes hands with the workmen with whom he has just been drinking. He comes down and sits beside* BASTIEN *in the place* SEGARD *has vacated.*]

Hidoux. Did Segard go?

Mme. Cordier. Yes. He has a touch of fever. He's gone to bed without his supper.

Hidoux. A touch of fever? What's that amount to? Is that any reason for refusing to drink with us? Let's have a glass of white wine. Madame, a glass of white wine while we wait for the soup. Therese! I'm dying of thirst. Eh, Bastien? White wine!

Bastien. White wine goes for me.

Hidoux. Drink while you can, my friend. I'm thinking you won't find much wine in Canada. [THERESE *serves them.*]

Bastien. We'll be drinking whiskey, old man. We'll be drinking champagne. You find that all over the world.

Therese. Oh, champagne! That's what I like. I could drink a whole bottle of it myself.

Young Workman. [*Calling.*] Therese!

Bastien. Could you now? *I'll* set you up to one, Therese. Have you got some here?

Therese. Yes, and it's good, too.

Bastien. We'll drink some, shall we? We'll drink champagne together.

Young Workman. [*Calling.*] Therese!

Therese. Coming. [*She goes to him.*]

Bastien. [*To* HIDOUX.] Yes, Hidoux, old man. Once we're settled as farmers, there's nothing to stop us having a case or two of champagne like the explorers do, and if we can't get it we'll do without. Wine's a good thing, but liberty's worth more than wine, and what we're going for . . . listen to me, Hidoux . . . is to be free . . . to be free.

Hidoux. [*Just slightly intoxicated*]. To be free . . . yes, I know all about that . . . but you'll permit me to answer you. In the first place, as to champagne, don't you forget that champagne is one thing and wine another. Champagne isn't wine . . . nothing like it.

Bastien. Oh . . . !

Hidoux. No! It's sweet. It's full of bubbles. It's fixed up. It hasn't got any smell . . . not what I call smell. If you start your day with a bit of bread and cheese, what do you drink? Bordeaux . . .Burgundy. . . . a little flask of Picolo . . . some Beaujolais . . . any wine at all that warms your heart. That's what you drink to put you right with life. But champagne. . . . It's a drink for a starched collar and a boiled shirt and state occasions. It's good for nothing but to make women laugh on a spree and to make you raise the spit out of your throat.

Bastien. You make me laugh, you do.

Hidoux. Good. Now you know what *I*

think of champagne. Now let's talk of something more important. Segard and you are right to go to Canada. I say so now. I always said so. You'll have a fine trip. You'll see new countries. You'll live in the open air. But you're always talking about liberty. Liberty! Liberty! That's easy to talk about. Bastien, do you want to know what I'm really thinking? You begin by signing a contract. You've got to pay for this. They hold back your money for that. You sign up to do one thing and another thing. Do you call that liberty? Aha, my boy, once you've begun signing papers, you'd best not talk any more about liberty.

Bastien. Oh, well . . . of course . . . perfect liberty.

Hidoux. Now, I don't know any more than you do about your farming scheme in Canada, but I'm ready to bet you they tie you up a dozen different ways, and you'll end by working for real estate agents. You're going out to work land . . . raw land. . . . You're not sure you can pay for it. But they'll give you credit . . . never fear . . . as much as you like. And your crops and your cattle. You'll see who you sell them to . . . who you'll be forced to sell them to . . . if I don't miss my guess the boat to bring them here will always be the Tenacity. No, my boy, it's the same everywhere. Liberty . . . real liberty . . . you've got to have that inside you . . . nowhere else. Look at me. I'm free. When I was young, they called me "the eel." No man's ever been able to get a hold on me. I never sell more than a little chunk of my liberty at a time . . . to make my living. I choose my work to suit my tastes and to suit my purse and my health. I give good service . . . any one can tell you . . . I'm on good terms with everyone. But when it comes to mortgaging the future, I can't see it, you know, and I never could. The very idea makes me sick. [*He empties his glass slowly.* Bastien *remains thoughtful, his elbows on the table.*]

Bastien. [*Rising.*] Oh, boy, if you don't mortgage the future just a little bit, you'll never get very far. And anyway, I'm not so badly tied up, once I'm there. I've got a whole year to back out.

Therese. [*To* Bastien *and* Hidoux.] Have you finished your drink yet? Will you have soup?

Hidoux. [*Seizing a bottle.*] We're just finishing.

Bastien. [*Taking* Therese *by the arm and leading her toward the door on the right.*] I'm coming to help you, Therese. I'm coming to help you set the table.

Scene Two

The same. Evening. The shutters are closed on the street windows. The electric lights burn only above the bar and the table beside it on the right.

At rise of the curtain, Mme. Cordier *is at the back, locking the door.* Therese *is rinsing glasses at the bar.* Bastien *is at the table beneath the light, reading a paper.*

Mme. Cordier. [*Hanging a bunch of keys on a nail behind the bar.*] I'm going to bed. You can put out the lights when you come.

Therese. Yes, Madame, I'm finished now.

Bastien. I'll be along in a minute, Mme. Cordier.

Mme. Cordier. Goodnight.

Bastien. Goodnight, Madame. [*He speaks without raising his eyes from the paper.*]

Therese. Goodnight, Mme. Cordier. [Mme. Cordier *goes out on the left. There is a moment of silence while* Therese *lines up the glasses on a shelf behind the bar.* Eh! You with the paper! The lights are going out!

Bastien. What time is it?

Therese. Must be eleven.

Bastien. [*Tossing his paper away and throwing himself back in his chair.*] Therese!

Therese. What?

Bastien. Be a good girl and serve me one more drink.

Therese. If you want one. But be quick about it. What? A glass of water?

Bastien. [*Confidentially, after a pause.*] A bottle of champagne and two glasses.

Therese. Oh, no!

Bastien. [*Rises and goes near her.*] Why not, Therese? Didn't I tell you I'd treat you? Now's the time. It will be nice to drink a couple of glasses of champagne and chat five minutes before we go to bed. It will do us both good.

Therese. All you have to do is to buy a bottle with Segard the day you go.

Bastien. That's understood. But that one's to say goodbye. That doesn't prevent another now. We'll drink goodbye with Segard, Hidoux, and Madame. Oh, I can see all

right what that bottle will be like. You'll be serving customers and you'll down your glass at one gulp. That bottle won't count. [*A silence.* THERESE, *perplexed, shifts her weight from one foot to another.*] Do you think the world's coming to an end on one drink? We could have had it over with while I've been talking. What's on your mind?

Therese. I'm thinking of Madame.

Bastien. Madame! Five minutes and she'll be snoring. What's it to her?

Therese. She'll have to know.

Bastien. What of it? When I pay for the bottle tomorrow, I'll tell her we drank it tonight. That's easy.

Therese. Oh, no! What do you suppose she'd say then? That I'd been working customers for champagne! And at this time of night! Just think!

Bastien. All right. She needn't know anything about it. Tomorrow you can tell her that just as you were putting out the lights, a sailor came and knocked at the door. And you sold him the bottle.

Therese. [*Accomplice.*] You're a smooth one, aren't you? You! Well, come along. Help me. We mustn't make a noise with the trap.

[BASTIEN *goes behind the bar and lifts the trap.* THERESE *goes down. While she is gone,* BASTIEN *chooses two glasses which he puts on the table. As she returns.*]

Let it down softly.

[BASTIEN *closes the trap.* THERESE *gives him the bottle, which he takes and places on the table. They sit down opposite one another.* BASTIEN *commences to uncork the bottle.*]

Hold on to the cork. Don't let it pop.

Bastien. Yes, my dear. There! [*The bottle is opened. He fills the glasses. They clink them together.*] So then! To Therese, who loves champagne, and may she always have all she wants of it!

Therese. To *wicked* Bastien and to his voyage! [*They drink.*]

Bastien. Not bad.

Therese. Oh, but it's good!

Bastien. You know what's good, don't you? This'll make your eyes shine. You'll be prettier than ever. Say, why don't you come to Canada? I'll let you drink it every Sunday.

Therese. Oh! Never in the world!

Bastien. Why not?

Therese. I'd never go on the sea. I'd be too scared. It's too far off . . . your Canada. I have my sisters here.

Bastien. I bet there's a boy around somewhere.

Therese. No. Not a one . . . not since last summer. My friend went off and forgot to leave his address. That was a nice trick, wasn't it?

Bastien. Wasn't he from these parts?

Therese. No, he was in the garrison here. He was a dear. An adjutant. [*She drinks.* BASTIEN *refills the glasses.*] Oh, wait a minute! I'll go fetch some biscuits. [*She goes, right, and returns with a plaie on which are some biscuits.*]

Bastien. [*As she is about to take her place again opposite him.*] Not there . . . here . . next to me . . . it's more . . . friendly.

Therese. [*Seating herself beside* BASTIEN.] And then . . . say . . . if I did go to Canada . . . that would be fine, wouldn't it? One hen for two roosters.

Bastien. Such a pretty hen! But Segard's not the boy to fight for his hen. I know him. He's spent two afternoons with you now. I'll bet he hasn't even started making love.

Therese. [*Quite detached from the subject.*] Oh, he's very nice. . . . he's very polite. He keeps me company. He chats with me . . . he's the kind who knows how to amuse you. He's good-hearted, too. Madame Cordier says so. She's right.

Bastien. He's a regular brother. That's why I brought him along.

Therese. [*Maliciously.*] He wouldn't play your trick of catching a girl on the stairs to kiss her.

Bastien. You ought to know that isn't a habit of mine, kissing women on the stairs. If I kissed you, Therese, well, that was because I wanted to . . . a lot. If Alfred wanted to kiss you as much as I did, I guess . . . he'd kiss you, too.

Therese. There's some things you want, but you don't dare take 'em.

Bastien. But when you want them more than anything on earth and when you're a man, you're not afraid. [*He slips his arm around her waist and kisses her on the neck.*]

Therese. Don't make me scream—you'll wake Madame.

Bastien. My pretty Therese, my little Therese—Listen to me—Here, drink your wine—[*Makes her drink and then drinks after her out*

of the same glass.] Now I'll know everything you think.

Therese. [*Drinks a swallow from* BASTIEN'S *glass. They drink "Brüderschaft".*] Me, too.

Bastien. Listen to me, now . . . When I was in the trenches dozing all day in the bottom of the dugout, I used to amuse myself thinking of the girl I could have loved . . . a girl my style . . . just made for me. I was like a hungry man dreaming of all the best there is to eat. I'd say to myself: Now if I could only have a girl like that here with me for an hour . . . I'd have kissed her all over from her head to her feet. She'd have been a real girl. She'd have laughed. She'd have been happy, all right, and she'd have given me back my kisses without kicking up any fuss. In bad times when my poor comrades were being blown to hell around me, every day, when I used to wonder how soon my turn would come, do you know what got me most? It was the idea of dying when I couldn't even remember what a kiss tasted like.

Therese. Poor poilu! [*She is touched. He kisses her.*]

Bastien. Then the armistice comes and life in barracks. Barracks at Metz. Barracks at Cologne, at Paris, at Marseilles, at Constantinople. At last I come back to the Avenue de Clichy. I'm lost there. It makes me sick. I stick around Paris for two months. Paris full of Czecho-Slovaks and Americans. . . . Now I'm on my way to Canada . . . to the furthest depths of Manitoba . . . they probably don't have any women there but squaws smoking pipes. . . . I ask you . . . would it be right? Would it be human if I didn't want to kiss you? And you, Therese, just like the girl I dreamed about in the trenches . . . just like her. [*He gives her a long kiss.* THERESE *drops her head languidly on his shoulder. He gazes at her and kisses her again.*]

Therese. [*Straightening.*] You mustn't kiss me any more.

Bastien. Why not?

Therese. You're going away.

Bastien. Yes. . . . I'm going away . . . that's true . . . but not tomorrow and not this week, and I'll be giving you many another kiss before I go. You must kiss while you can and be kissed for all you're worth, so that you'll have nothing to throw at yourself afterwards when you're alone and far from love. Get me? Unless you like champagne better than kisses, Therese . . . Unless you don't like me.

Therese. [*She bursts out laughing, seizes* BASTIEN'S *head in her two hands and kisses him suddenly.*] There now! [*She empties her glass.*] And there! [*She rises.*] And now, young man, straight to bed. It's very late.

[*Humming and dancing, she clears the table, washes the glasses and sets them in their places. She takes down the keys and goes to the door at the back, which she opens to throw the empty bottle out on the quay.* BASTIEN *follows her, kisses her again when he can catch her and comes back with her when she has locked the door again, picks her up off the ground and whirls her around.*]

Therese. [*Freeing herself.*] Come now. It's time to say goodnight and go to bed. [*She puts out the light above the bar.*]

Bastien. Therese!

Therese. What?

Bastien. Come here. I want to ask you something . . . whisper. . . .

[THERESE *comes and* BASTIEN *whispers something in her ear.*]

Therese. Oh, no!

Bastien. Yes. [*He puts his arm around her waist and impels her toward the door on the left.*]

Therese. No, Bastien.

Bastien. Sleepy?

Therese. Oh, it's not that . . .

Bastien. Well, then, say yes. . . . it's so easy. . . .

Therese. [*After a moment's silence, during which she hangs limply in* BASTIEN'S *arms.*] You must promise not to tell. You must promise not to tell Segard.

Bastien. Not a soul. . . . above all, not Segard. Come. [*He opens the door.*]

Therese. We must be quiet on the stairs. [*She puts out the last lamp.*]

ACT THREE

Same room. Morning. The shutters are still closed. The only light enters through a little window above the door.

At the rise of the curtain, the stage is empty. The door on the left opens softly. BASTIEN *enters in his traveling clothes as we saw him in the first act. He carries a valise, lays it on the table, starts to open it. Then* THERESE *enters from the door on the right. She wears a simple street*

dress and carries her rain coat on her arm. She, too, carries a valise, larger than BASTIEN'S. *She approaches the table on tiptoe and sets it beside the other. Their voices when they speak, are low.*

Therese. There you are, dearest. [*She opens the valise.*] See how much room I've got left.

Bastien. Good! That does the trick. [*He kisses* THERESE *enthusiastically, then he examines the valise.*] This way I can leave our valise for Segard. It belongs to him. Just give me five minutes to pack my things.

[*He takes his things out of the bag and lists its contents. During the following conversation he is continually handing clothes and various articles to* THERESE. *She in turn packs them in the large valise which she has brought.*]

Therese. There's plenty of time. It's still too early. I couldn't sleep a wink . . . my darling. . . . Can you believe it's a week since we two drank our champagne at this table?

Bastien. Are you happy?

Therese. Oh, yes, I am happy . . . Only . . . I'm all upset . . . going away like this . . . you know . . . I mean without a word to Madame . . . And Segard. When you told him about it last night, what did he say? I was afraid he might come down too, this morning.

Bastien. I didn't tell him.

Therese. You didn't?

Bastien. No. And I had it all fixed, too. I figured on seeing him in his room before I went to bed, and just like that they told us the Tenacity was ready. Then I lost my nerve. I wish to God I had told him three or four days ago. So I hunted up Hidoux . . . I told him how things stood . . . he'll do the rest. He knows what to say . . . and then . . . I wrote Alfred a letter.

Therese. Oh! That's good. A long letter?

Bastien. Yes. . . . a letter. But just the same I ought to have seen the poor devil . . . I simply didn't have the nerve . . . Not when the boat's sailing today and all that. I couldn't tell him I've backed out . . . me, the boss of the expedition. I'm the one who was bent on going. I roped him in. A friend like Alfred. I couldn't do it. I didn't have the face.

Therese. That's all very well, but everybody knows that love is stronger than anything.

Bastien. No they don't. Before this happened, I didn't know it myself.

Therese. [*Gratefully.*] My darling!

Bastien. No. You see now, there's nothing for it but making our getaway. [*A silence.*] After all, when you come to think of it, real liberty . . . you don't go chasing that to Canada . . . tying yourself up for ten years . . . you've got to have that inside you. Real liberty . . . that's changing your life . . . like that . . . when you have the notion. It doesn't matter what we do, my pretty Therese, so long as we're together . . . and we won't sell more than a little chunk of our liberty at a time to make a living . . . Canada? Sure . . . It was a good idea, if you had plenty of money and none of this signing contracts. Once begin to sign papers . . ! and then . . . I thought they talked French there . . . and what do the people on the Tenacity tell me! . . . they say Manitoba is the very province where they don't talk French! Well! . . . So much for that. And then . . . and then . . . my darling doesn't want to go there.

[*Therese kisses him eagerly. A silence.*]

Therese. It's only on Segard's account that I feel badly.

Bastien. Me too.

Therese. What will he do now?

Bastien. He? Huh! Oh, he'll go back to Paris. Who knows? He may be happy enough.

Therese. He is never sure of anything.

Bastien. [*Has finished his packing and has put* SEGARD'S *valise in order.*] You're right there.

Therese. Oh, my dearest.

Bastien. What?

Therese. I think he's a little bit in love with me.

Bastien. Like all the rest. Who isn't? Close your valise now. Quick.

Therese. [*Closing the valise.*] But he . . . you see . . . I don't know why . . . I'd have been terribly embarrassed . . . if he'd found out about us . . . that we were . . . together . . . like we were . . . every night . . . before we went away. That's why . . . just so he wouldn't think I was running after you these last days . . . I spent all my time being friendly with him and laughing with him . . . inside, I hated it.

Bastien. [*Has fastened his valise.*] Ready, Therese? We're all set. That's all. It's time. Got the key? [*He points to the ray of sunlight which comes in through the transom.*] Look! It's a fine day. We've got a little money. We can have a jolly honeymoon. We'll just take any train going north . . . We don't care. No one will know where we are.

Therese. [*She has taken the keys and opens the door to the back.*] Yes, my precious.

[*The door opens. We see the quay shining in the morning sun.* THERESE *comes back to put the bunch of keys in place. They go out, closing the door cautiously. The scene remains empty a moment. Some workmen pass outside the window.* MME. CORDIER *comes in from the left.*]

Mme. Cordier. [*Glancing about the room.*] He isn't in his room. Therese! . . . Not here! [*She goes to the door on the right which she opens.*] Therese! She didn't sleep here last night! [*She takes down the bunch of keys and goes to open the door.*] Let her sleep out if she likes, but I won't have her leaving the door unlocked, and she's got to be here on time.

[*She goes out and opens the shutters. Two workmen enter, eating as they come, holding their bread and knives in their hands. They sit down.* MME. CORDIER *joins them.*]

Workman. [*To* MME. CORDIER.] A glass of white wine, if you please.

Mme. Cordier. Here you are!

[*She serves them. In the course of the following scene, they go out. Three young workmen come in and go to the bar.*]

First Workman. Some coffee, please, Mme. Cordier. For men just come from swimming.

Mme. Cordier. You poor boys! There isn't any coffee this morning. Therese didn't get up to make it.

First Workman. Aha! That's her lover's fault. He wouldn't let her go last night.

Second Workman. We can forgive her if that's the trouble. How about apple brandy?

Third Workman. Yes, and let's be quick about it.

First Workman. Three, then, Mme. Cordier.

[MME. CORDIER *serves. The* ENGLISH SAILOR *enters.*]

English Sailor. Mornin'.

Mme. Cordier. Oh, good morning. I remember you. Have you come after my two boarders? [*The three young workmen pay and go.*] Thank you, gentlemen. Come in again.

English Sailor. Yes, Madame. Tell 'em the Tenacity sails this mornin' at nine.

Mme. Cordier. Oh, they heard last night at the boat. So it's settled . . . at nine o'clock. I'll go call them. Will you take something?

English Sailor. Yes, please. A bit of cognac.

[SEGARD *enters, dressed for his departure.*]

Mme. Cordier. Ah, well, here's Segard now. Segard, this is the sailor from the Tenacity. You sail this morning, my boy, at nine o'clock.

Segard. Oh, good morning. [*He shakes hands with the sailor.*]

English Sailor. Mornin'. Your friend and you wants to be aboard before nine.

Segard. We will be. We're all ready.

English Sailor. Can I lend you a hand with your luggage?

Segard. We already took our trunk down . . . a long time ago. We've only got that little bag to carry. Bastien must have brought it down. Where is Bastien?

Mme. Cordier. I haven't seen him yet.

Segard. [*To the* ENGLISH SAILOR.] We can make out with the bag all right. Thanks.

English Sailor. At nine o'clock then. That's when she sails. [*He drinks.*] See you later.

Segard. See you soon. [*The* ENGLISH SAILOR *goes.*] Well, Mme. Cordier, we're off this time.

Mme. Cordier. Yes. You'll be saying goodbye to us and just as we were beginning to get used to you.

Segard. Oh, not goodbye, Mme. Cordier. We'll come back. We'll find some way to see France again from time to time. I shall come back here. I know I shall come back. I've promised myself that much. And we'll keep in touch by letters too . . . Where is . . . Therese?

Mme. Cordier. [*Amused.*] Therese! Therese! She didn't sleep here last night. And she hasn't come back yet.

Segard. Where *did* she sleep?

Mme. Cordier. How do I know? I daresay she went to her sister's. It's nothing to me, but she ought to let me know . . . and she ought to be here this morning. Nothing ready . . . no hot coffee.

[HIDOUX *enters.*]

Hidoux. [*Troubled.*] Good morning, Mme. Cordier. Well! Good morning, Segard! [*He shakes hands.*] What's this? No Therese, I take it.

Mme. Cordier. No. Why?

Hidoux. No Bastien either, hein? Has Bastien gone out?

Segard. I don't know.

Mme. Cordier. We haven't seen him yet.

Segard. Do you want him for something? He brought my valise down. Perhaps he went upstairs again. I'll go see.

Hidoux. No. No. It isn't worth the trouble, my friend. He isn't there. I just left him. I . . . wanted to find out . . . if you knew.

Segard. What? If we knew about the Tenacity going this morning?

Hidoux. Oh, no . . . not that. Oh, well . . . it's no use beating about the bush. There you are! I just left Bastien and Therese at the station. They've cleared out together.

Mme. Cordier. [*Overwhelmed.*] Eh!

Segard. [*The same.*] Therese and Bastien! Where to?

Hidoux. [*He pulls a letter from his pocket which he holds out to* SEGARD.] My poor boy! Here.

[*While* HIDOUX *speaks to* MME. CORDIER, *who gesticulates violently,* SEGARD *sits at the table and reads the letter, then sits motionless.*]

Mme. Cordier. That's a nice way for a girl to act, isn't it? Three years in a house as she's been here with me! Three years that I trusted her and made a friend of her! You can't tell me!

Hidoux. Oh, she hopes you'll forgive her.

Mme. Cordier. She can forgive herself. She's put me in a nice fix . . . running off like this and no notice. [*She turns to* SEGARD.] Well, my poor Segard! Here you are high and dry, too! Your friend's a nice one, isn't he?

Segard. [*To* HIDOUX *who comes near him.*] He speaks of papers . . . my valise . . . he hopes I'll be easy on him . . . he tells me Hidoux will explain . . .

Hidoux. There's not much to explain. He wanted some fun with Therese . . . he'd have played with her a bit . . . here he is . . . caught . . . he's impulsive, you know . . . he doesn't stop half way . . . all of a sudden, things were serious . . .

Segard. How long has it gone on?

Hidoux. Not more than a week . . . That's to say—he's at his craziest right now.

Segard. What about Therese?

Hidoux. Well, you don't think she'd have been doing this if she wasn't crazy too? Once you succeed in getting a woman, she adopts you. There's no escaping her. You're the only man in the world for her . . . you're her darling till she's had enough of you . . . But a woman like Therese . . . if you take her, she has you where she wants you . . . Bastien got caught . . . caught fast . . . That's the kind of boy he is. He fell in love with her from the start . . . head over heels . . . she doesn't want to go to Canada . . . all right . . . he stays here.

Mme. Cordier. [*Who has begun to sweep the room.*] And I thought that boy was as firm as a rock.

Hidoux. Oh . . . firm as a rock! The cock on the church steeple is firm enough for you . . . the wind's steady. But that doesn't mean the wind won't change some fine day.

[*Another silence.*]

Segard. Why didn't he tell me? Why didn't he tell me what was going on—a week ago?

Mme. Cordier. Yes . . . you . . . his friend, too.

Hidoux. Do you suppose he knew himself what he was headed for a week ago? He only knew one thing . . . that he wanted Therese . . . more and more.

Segard. [*Bitterly.*] What a man of decision he is!

Hidoux. Yes, and you can't say he only made up his mind last night . . . that is . . . perhaps he wasn't quite sure before last night . . . perhaps he didn't quite know what he would do . . . she made him a bit ashamed of himself on your account. And then . . . often, you know—when you do make up your mind, all you really do is to obey the force of things; and you don't act until the last moment . . . because sometimes the course of events changes everything. It was all the harder for him to tell you about it because he *was* your friend. That's why he waited. And the longer he waited, the harder it was for him to speak. The truth is: he would have told you last night if they hadn't come to say that the boat was ready. That would have made the pill more bitter for you to swallow. He didn't have the courage to offer it to you himself. He felt like a sneak—you understand.

Segard. But anyway, when he began with Therese, he ought to have told me then.

Hidoux. My friend, men boast about their luck, but when they are in love, they don't tell about that. It's just the opposite with women. Bastien had put on too many airs to own up to you he'd been caught. He only told me about it last night because he didn't see any other way out. You were the same, poor boy. Too touchy over it to say you were in love. For you were too . . . I've got eyes in my head.

Mme. Cordier. Yes, and if I was looking for anything, it certainly wasn't this.

Segard. [*With an effort, after a silence.*] What are they going to do? Where have they gone?

Hidoux. [*With a vague gesture.*] Up North. Going to peddle things in the markets of the liberated regions.

Segard. That life will never suit Therese.

Hidoux. With Bastien it will suit her well enough . . . with someone else it might be different. [*A silence.*] What are you going to do, Segard? Your boat sails at nine o'clock.

[Mme. Cordier *approaching, stands motionless, her hands on her hips, opposite* Hidoux. *Both of them look at* Segard, *who sits dully at the table, his gaze fixed on the floor. A silence.*]

Segard. [*Straightening suddenly.*] Oh . . . I'll go . . . I don't know . . . I'll take the boat.

Mme. Cordier. Alone?

Segard. Yes.

Mme. Cordier. Wouldn't you rather go back home? Back to Paris?

Segard. Go back home? That's what I wanted to do when I came here. But not now. Anyway, I've signed my contract to go. Why should I back out? I'm all ready. My trunk's on the boat.

Mme. Cordier. But, as far as that goes, Hidoux will get your trunk for you and tell them you're not leaving. What can they do to you?

Hidoux. Honestly, at the bottom of your heart, which would you like best? To go back to Paris or take the boat or just to stay on here?

Segard. None of them. [*A silence.*] Oh, no. I can't stay here . . . not now . . . I'm supposed to go . . . I may as well go.

Mme. Cordier. You were to go with Bastien. But now if he's deserted you . . .

Segard. [*In a choked voice after a brief silence.*] Is that it, Mme. Cordier? Because Bastien won't go to Canada, do you think I can't manage to go myself? It's true I didn't want to go as he did, but do you think I can't go without him? Oh, I tell you . . . perhaps now for the first time . . . I feel a real desire . . . sad or not . . . to go.

Hidoux. Well then, my boy, go, go on . . . go, and good luck!

Mme. Cordier. If I were he. . . .

Hidoux. If you were he, Madame, you'd go. You'd follow the current. You see, Madame, there are people like Segard who float through life like corks on a stream. Sometimes they go to dream and rock in the backwaters or among the reeds. If fate permits, they may stay there forever. If not . . . an eddy . . . and they're dragged out of their shelter and whirled along again. That's the way it is with people like Segard.

Segard. And the others?

Hidoux. The others are weather-cocks . . . that's Bastien's kind. They're very proud and sure of themselves because they have pivots. They talk about their will and their decision. The other kind . . . that's my kind too, if you like . . . I . . . Hidoux . . . the free man . . . free of men, but none the less the slave of winds and river . . . Now an old weathercock . . . now a battered cork . . . a battered cork! and always drawn towards the necks of bottles.

Segard. [*After a moment of reflection.*] But there are times . . . how shall I say? . . . it happens, if you like, that the river has two arms, and the road forks . . .

Hidoux. Often.

Segard. [*Vividly*] Then . . . then you can choose.

Hidoux. Oh, yes. It may happen so. You may choose, if you have courage. If not, the current chooses for you. Oh, yes. Times come when you may choose and quickly, but it happens too, my poor Segard . . . sometimes . . . when the passage is narrow, that there is only room for one, and you are pushed aside by the one who has more courage than you have to make the choice. [*There is a long silence.*] Bah! That doesn't mean that life can't be beautiful.

Segard. And sad.

Hidoux. And sad and gay and sad again. Do you think life will long be gay for Bastien and for Therese?

Segard. What did she have to say?

Hidoux. Who?

Segard. Therese. What did she say?

Hidoux. How do I know?

Segard. Did she laugh?

Hidoux. Oh, I don't know. And if I did know, do you think I'd tell you? I only had a glimpse of her. The train was starting. Do you expect lovers just in love to bother about anything but themselves? . . . Well, then, what have you decided?

Segard. [*Plaintively.*] I'm going . . . I'd rather go . . . I want to be far away . . . I want to be all alone.

Mme. Cordier. You mean that?

Segard. Yes.

Mme. Cordier. You'll take a bite before you go?

Segard. No, thanks, Mme. Cordier.

Mme. Cordier. Oh yes! Oh yes! This is no reason. . . .

Hidoux. At least, you cannot refuse a drink to say goodbye. Mme. Cordier, a good little bottle of white wine for us to drink between us . . . just we three.

Segard. No, Mme. Cordier . . . Please . . . no, my dear old Hidoux . . . let me off. I haven't got the heart to drink . . . I couldn't . . .

Hidoux. Ah, you're wrong there, believe me. When a man's in your state . . . I know what it's like . . . the best thing for you is a drink. That lifts the weight from your heart. That makes your sorrows sing. That makes you proud of your sorrow. I've seen the emigrants drink. Hah! Afterwards, you'd have said they'd just been crowned kings and were setting sail for their kingdoms. [SEGARD *looks at him smiling.*] That makes you laugh? All right then. Now you'll have a drink with me . . . Mme. Cordier. . . .

Segard. No, no, old man. You're too kind. But it would choke me. I couldn't swallow it. See, I'd rather go right off. [*He takes his valise.*]

Mme. Cordier. But it isn't time yet. You have still plenty of time.

Hidoux. You've an hour yet.

Segard. I'd rather, Mme. Cordier. I'd rather go aboard right now. You understand. I *am* a little . . . sad. I'd rather be alone. Once I'm on board I'll be all right. I won't worry about anything after that. Would you like to go along with me, Hidoux?

Hidoux. Well, if you're set on going right off like this, give us your baggage.

[*He takes it,* SEGARD *approaches* MME. CORDIER, *holding out his hand.*]

Segard. Mme. Cordier!

Mme. Cordier. Goodbye, my boy. Come back again. You've had bad luck with Bastien. Let's hope you find another friend out there.

Segard. Let's hope so.

Mme. Cordier. And look! You've a fine day for starting . . . a fine warm day.

Segard. It was Bastien who had the fine day for his starting. I should have liked rain . . . like the last few days . . . better for me.

Hidoux. [*To* SEGARD.] After all, it may be you who has the best of the bargain without knowing it. [*All three go to the door.*]

Segard. [*After a long look around the little restaurant.*] It may be me who should have stayed. Who knows? [*A silence. Then suddenly.*] Thank you, Mme. Cordier, for the time I've been in your house . . . and goodbye.

Mme. Cordier. Let's have word of you. And don't say goodbye. Come back again. You will come back, as you've said, won't you?

Segard. [*Vaguely.*] Maybe.

[*He makes a gesture of farewell and goes out with* HIDOUX. MME. CORDIER *remains a moment on the doorstep and looks in the direction which* SEGARD *and* HIDOUX *have taken. Then she steps aside to let a group of travelers into the restaurant. They put their bags on a table and sit down.*]

Mme. Cordier. [*Resting both hands on the table.*] Good morning, gentlemen. What can I do for you? [*Business of serving.*]

THE END

SUCH IS LIFE

(KÖNIG NIKOLA; ODER, SO IST DAS LEBEN)

By FRANZ WEDEKIND

Translated from the German by Francis J. Ziegler

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FRANZ WEDEKIND AND HIS PLAYS

Franz Wedekind, the author of *Such is Life*, was born in Hanover, Germany, in 1864. After studying law, he settled in Munich in 1888; then for several years travelled extensively, spending most of his time at various capitals, living more or less among the dregs of society, observing life from many angles. After his return to Munich, he was by turns vaudeville performer, editor, public reader of Ibsen's plays, and cabaret singer. Finally he formed a company to produce his own plays, acted in it, and toured various cities in Germany. He died in 1918.

In the elemental force of his temperament and genius Wedekind invites comparison with Strindberg. He had something of Strindberg's abnormality of personality. He acknowledged no obligations to "art"; he contemptuously spurned conventions in the theatre; and he insisted upon going his own way. Though his work shows no such consistent development, he resembles Strindberg in that he is intensively subjective, writing out of his own experiences, and in that his own personality gives a kind of unity to a product surprisingly varied in both subject-matter and form.

Wedekind's outlook upon life was entirely individual. He saw the world, as he himself states, as a "domesticated zoo", and life as a phantasmagoria. To him life is a pullulating welter in which animals of various degrees struggle for existence, the strong of will living heartily and conquering, the weak of will living feebly and being defeated. He demands a drama that shall express life as he sees it, whose content shall be based upon elemental facts and whose form shall be unliterary, with a technique unhampered by precedent. This theory he carries out with fair consistency, for his subject-matter is indeed usually based upon the raw and crude facts of life as he sees it, and his technique is unconventional, employing methods that range from something closely akin to naturalism up to fantasy and sheer extravaganza. He rejects the formula of pure naturalism that Hauptmann had made triumphant about the time of Wedekind's earliest plays; for he sees in the characters portrayed by naturalism only unimportant, weak-willed playthings of natural forces. None the less, he uses naturalism as a groundwork, and adds to it a kind of symbolism, as in his *Earth Spirit* and *Pandora's Box,* plays of the underworld, as powerful as they are brutal. But this is only one of his devices. He employs various methods from play to play, and even in any one single play changes his method without warning or apology.

Although among the themes of Wedekind's twenty-four plays are sex-perversion, prostitution and insanity, he maintains his sense of ethical discrimination. And for all his picturing of revolting persons and situations, he is fully capable of sympathy, tenderness, and even poetry. Whatever his subject or his mood, however, his interest is always in persons of strong will, who live heartily and fearlessly, even though they live vilely. Uncompromising, bold, and sincere, almost anarchic in both principle and practice, Wedekind has, for obvious reasons, exercised an immense influence upon the post-war playwrights of Germany, especially upon the "expressionists".

Such is Life shows a side of Wedekind's genius that is thoroughly characteristic but that has perhaps been overshadowed by other more obvious traits. Here he appears as the poet and mystic which, strange as it may seem, he felt himself fundamentally to be, when he says, "The reunion of holiness and beauty as the divine object of pious devotion is the purpose to which I offer my life, toward which, indeed, I have striven since my earliest childhood." The play is to some extent autobiographic, for in King Nicola Wedekind partly portrays himself—a king in the realm of poetry, who has been contemptuously rejected by his own people, misunderstood, persecuted and exiled, and,—crowning ignominy,—accepted at last simply as a maker of fun, a national jester. Poetry, allegory, and satire mingle in *Such is Life,* which certainly possesses greater beauty of conception and style, as well as greater universality, than any other of Wedekind's plays, though it may yield to the better known *Awakening of Spring* in singleness of purpose. It was first produced by Max Reinhardt in 1903 at the Neues Theater, Berlin.

CHARACTERS

NICOLA, *King of Umbria*
PRINCESS ALMA, *his daughter*
PIETRO FOLCHI, *Master Butcher*
FILIPO FOLCHI, *his son*
ANDREA VALORI
BENEDETTO NARDI
PANDOLFO, *Master Tailor*
Citizens of Perugia
A SOLDIER
A FARMER
A VAGABOND
MICHELE
BATTISTE
NOE
Journeymen Tailors
THE PRESIDING JUDGE
THE KING'S ATTORNEY GENERAL
THE ADVOCATE
THE CLERK OF THE COURT
THE JAILER
A CIRCUS RIDER
AN ACTOR
A PROCURESS
FIRST THEATRE MANAGER
SECOND THEATRE MANAGER
A PAGE
FIRST SERVANT
SECOND SERVANT
Artisans, judges, townspeople, strollers, theatre audience, theatre servants, soldiers and halberdiers

The action takes place in Italy in the fifteenth century

SUCH IS LIFE

ACT ONE

Scene One

The Throne Room

First Servant. [*Leaning out of the window.*] They are coming! It will overtake us like the day of judgment!

Second Servant. [*Rushing in through the opposite door.*] Do you know that the King is taken?

First Servant. Our King a captive?

Second Servant. Since early yesterday! The dogs have thrown him into prison!

First Servant. Then we had better scamper away, or they will treat us as if we were the beds upon which he has debauched their children!

[*The* servants *rush out. The room becomes filled with armed workmen of various trades, heated and blood-splashed from combat.*]

Pietro Folchi. [*Steps from their midst.*] Fellow-citizens!—The byways of Perugia are strewn with the corpses of our children and our brothers. Many of you have a pious wish to give your beloved dead a fitting resting place.—Fellow-citizens! First we must fulfill a higher duty. Let us do our part as quickly as possible, so that the dead shall have perished, not solely for their bravery, but for the lasting welfare of their native land! Let us seize the moment! Let us give our state a constitution which, in future, will protect her children from the assassin's weapons and insure her citizens the just reward of their labors!

The Citizens. Long live Pietro Folchi!

Andrea Valori. Fellow-citizens! Unless we decide at once upon our future form of government, we shall only be holding this dearly captured place for our enemies until we lose it again. We are holding the former King in custody in prison; the patricians, who supported themselves in idleness by the sweat of our brows, are in flight toward neighboring states. Now, I ask you, fellow-citizens, shall we proclaim our state the Umbrian Republic, as has been done in Florence, in Parma, and in Siena?

The Citizens. Long live Freedom! Long live Perugia! Long live the Umbrian Republic!

Pietro Folchi. Let us proceed without delay to elect a podesta! Here are tables and styles in plenty. Let each one write the name of the man whom he considers best fitted to guide the destiny of the state and to defend the power we have gained from our enemies.

The Citizens. Long live our podesta, Pietro Folchi! Long live the Republic of Perugia!

Andrea Valori. Fellow-citizens! Let there be no precipitate haste at this hour! It is necessary to strengthen so the power we have won that they cannot prevail against us as long as we live. Would we succeed if we made Umbria a republic? Under the shelter of republican liberty, the sons of the banished nobles would use the vanity of our daughters to bind us again in chains while we slept unsuspectingly at night! Look at Florence! Look at Siena! Is not liberty in those states only the cloak of the most dissolute despotism, which is turning their citizens to beggars? Perugia grew in power and prosperity under her kings, until the sceptre passed into the hands of a fool and a wastrel. Let us raise the worthiest of us up to his throne. Then we who stand here exhausted from the conflict, will become the future aristocracy and the lords of the land; only then can we enjoy in lasting peace our hard won prerogatives.

The Citizens. Long live the king! Long live Pietro Folchi!

A Few Voices. Long live Freedom!

The Citizens. [*Louder.*] Long live our king, Pietro Folchi! Long live King Pietro!

A Few Citizens. [*Leaving the room angrily.*] We did not shed our blood for this. Down with slavery! Long live Freedom!

The Citizens. Hurrah for King Pietro!

Pietro Folchi. [*Mounting the throne.*] Called to it by your choice, I mount this throne and name myself King of Umbria! The dissatisfied who have separated from our midst with the cry of "freedom" are no less our enemies than the idle nobles who have turned their backs to our walls. I shall keep a watchful eye on them, as they fought on our side only in the hope of plundering in the ruins of our beloved city. Where is my son Filipo?

Filipo Folchi. [*Stepping from out the press.*] What is your will, my father?

King Pietro. From the wounds above your eyes, I see that you did not shun death yesterday or today! I name you commander of our war forces. Post our loyal soldiers at the ten gates of the city, and order the drum to beat in the market place for recruits. Perugia must be armed for an expedition to its frontiers in the shortest possible time. You will be answerable to me for the life of every citizen and responsible for the inviolate safety of all property. Now bring the former king of Umbria forth from his prison. It is proper that none save I announce to him his sentence.

Filipo. Your commands shall be observed punctually.—Long live King Pietro! [*Exit.*]

King Pietro. Where is my son-in-law, Andrea Valori?

Andrea Valori. [*Stepping forward.*] Here, my king, at your command!

King Pietro. I name you treasurer of the Kingdom of Umbria. You and my cousin, Giullio Diaceto, together with our celebrated jurist, Bernardo Ruccellai, whose persuasive words abroad have more than once preserved our city from bloodshed; you three shall be my advisors in the discharge of affairs of state. [*After the three summoned have come forward.*] Seat yourselves beside me. [*They do so.*] I can only fulfill the high duty of ruling others if the most able men in the state will enlist their lives in my service.—And now, let the others go to bury the victims of this two days' conflict. To show that they did not die in vain for the welfare of their brothers and children, let this be a day of mourning and earnest vigilance.

[*All leave the room save* King Pietro, *the Councillors and several guards. Then the captive* King *is led in by* Filipo Folchi *and several armed men.*]

The King. Who is bold enough to dare bring us here at the bidding of these disloyal knaves?!

King Pietro. According to the provision of our laws, the royal power in Umbria fell to you as eldest son of King Giovanni. You have used your power to degrade the name of a king with roisterers and courtesans. You chose banquets, masquerades and hunting parties, by which you have dissipated the treasures of the state and made the country poor and defenseless, in preference to every princely duty. You have robbed us of our daughters, and your deeds have been the most corrupting example to our sons. You have lived as little for the state's welfare as for your own. You accomplished only the downfall of your own and our native land.

The King. To whom is the butcher speaking?

Filipo Folchi. Silence!

The King. Give me back my sword!

Andrea Valori. Put him in chains! He is raving!

The King. Let the butcher speak further.

King Pietro. Your life is forfeited and lies in my hands. But I will suspend sentence of death if in legal document you will relinquish in my favor, and in favor of my heirs, your claim and that of your kin to the throne, and acknowledge me as your lord, your rightful successor, and as the ruler of Umbria.

The King. [*Laughs boisterously.*] Ha, ha, ha! Ask of a carp lying in the pan to cease to be a fish! That this worm has our life in his power proves indeed that princes are not gods, because, like other men, they are mortal. The lightning, too, can kill; but he who is born a king does not die like an ordinary mortal! Let one of these artisans lay hands upon us, if his blood does not first chill in his veins. Then he shall see how a king dies!

King Pietro. You are a greater enemy to yourself than your deadliest foes can possibly be. Although you will not abdicate, we will be mild, in thankful remembrance of the blessed rule of King Giovanni, whose own son you are, and banish you now and forever from the confines of the Umbrian States, under penalty of death.

The King. Banish! Ha, ha, ha! Who in the world will banish the King! Shall fear of death keep him from the land of which Heaven appointed him the ruler? Only an artisan could hold life so dear and a crown so cheap!—Ha, ha, ha! These pitiable fools seem to imagine that when a crown is placed upon a butcher he becomes a king! See how the paunch-belly grows pale and shivers up there, like a cheese flung against the wall! Ha, ha, ha! How they stare at us, the stupid blockheads, with their moist dogs' eyes, as if the sun had fallen at their feet!

Princess Alma. [*Rushes in, breaking through the guards at the door. She is fifteen years old, is clad in rich but torn garments and her hair is dishevelled.*] Let me pass! Let me go to my father! Where is my father? [*Sinking down before the* KING *and embracing his knees.*] Father! Have I you again, my dearly beloved father?

The King. [*Raising her.*] So I hold you unharmed in my arms once more, my dearest treasure! Why must you come to me with your heartrending grief just at this moment when I had almost stamped these bloodthirsty hounds beneath my feet again?

Alma. Then let me die with you! To share death with you would be the greatest happiness, after what I have lived through in the streets of Perugia these last two days! They would not let me come to you in prison, but now you are mine again! Remember, my father, I have no one else in the world but you!

The King. My child, my dear child, why do you compel me to confess before my murderers how weak I am! Go! I have brought my fate upon myself, let me bear it alone. These men will confirm it that you may expect more compassion and better fortune from my bitterest enemies than if you cling now to your father, broken by fate.

Alma. [*With greatest intensity.*] No, do not say that! I beseech you do not speak so again! [*Caressingly.*] Only remember that it is not yet decided that they murder us. And if we had rather die together than be parted who in the world can harm us then!

King Pietro. [*Who during this scene has quietly come to an agreement with his councillors, turning to the* KING.] The city of Perugia will give your daughter the most careful education until her majority; and then bestow upon her a princely dower; if she will promise to give her hand in marriage to my son, Filipo Folchi, who will be my successor upon this throne.

The King. You have heard, my child? The throne of your father is open to you!

Alma. O my God, how can you so scoff at your poor child!

King Pietro. [*To the* KING.] As for you, armed men under the command of my son shall conduct you, within this hour, to the confines of this country. Have a care that you do not take so much as a step within our land hereafter, or your head shall fall by the hand of the executioner in the market place of Perugia!

[FILIPO FOLCHI *has the* KING *and the* PRINCESS, *clinging close to her father, led off by men-at-arms. He is about to follow them, when his arm is seized by* BENEDETTO NARDI, *who rushes in breathless with rage.*]

Benedetto Nardi. Have I caught you, scoundrel! [*To* KING PIETRO.] This son of yours, Pietro Folchi, in company with his drunken comrades, chased my helpless child through the streets of the city yesterday evening, and was about to lay hands on her when two of my journeymen, attracted by her cries, put the scoundrels to flight with their clubs. The wretch still carries the bloody mark above his eyes!

King Pietro. [*In anger.*] Defend yourself, my son!

Filipo Folchi. He speaks the truth.

King Pietro. Back to the shop with you! Must I see my rule disgraced on its first day by my own son in most impious fashion! The law shall work its greatest hardship upon you! Afterward you shall stay in the butcher shop until the citizens of Perugia kneel before me and beg me to have pity on you! Put him in chains!

[*The mercenaries who led out the* KING *return with* ALMA. *Their leader throws himself on his knees before the throne.*]

The Mercenary. O Sire, do not punish your servants for this frightful misfortune! As we were leading the King just here before the portal across the bridge of San

Margherita, a company of our comrades marched past and pressed us against the coping. The prisoner seized that opportunity to leap into the flood swollen by the rain. We needed all our strength to prevent this maiden from doing likewise, and when I was about to leap after the prisoner, the raging waves had long engulfed him.

King Pietro. His life is not the most regrettable sacrifice of these bloody days! Hundreds of better men have fallen for him.—[*To the Councillors.*] Let the child be taken to the Ursuline nuns and kept under most careful guard. [*Rising.*] The sitting of the counsel is closed.

All Present. Long live King Pietro!

Scene Two

A highway along the edge of a forest

[*The* King *and* Princess Alma, *both clad as beggars.*]

The King. How long have I been dragging you from place to place while you begged for me?

Alma. Rest yourself, Father; you will be in better spirits afterward.

The King. [*Sits down by the wayside.*] Why did not the raging waves swallow me that evening! Then everything would have been over long ago!

Alma. Did you leap over the side of the bridge to put an end to your life? I thought what strength resided in your arms and that the rushing waters would help you to liberty. Without this faith how should I have had the courage to escape from the convent and from the city?

The King. Below us here lies the rich hunting grounds where I have often ridden hawking with my court. You were too young to accompany us.

Alma. Why will you not leave this little land of Umbria, my father! The world is so large! In Siena, in Modena, your friends dwell. They would welcome you with joy, and at last your dear head would be safe.

The King. You offer me much, my child! Still, I beg of you not to keep repeating this question. Just in this lies my fate: If I were able to leave this land, I should not have lost my crown. But my soul is ruled by desires which I cannot relinquish, even to save my life. As king, I believe myself safe enough from the world to live my dreams without danger. I forgot that the king, the peasant and every other man, must live only to preserve his station and to defend his estate, unless he would lose both.

Alma. Now you are scoffing at yourself, my father!

The King. That is the way of the world! —You think I am scoffing at myself?— That, at least, might be something for which men would contribute to our support. As I offer myself to them now I am of no use. Either I offend them by my arrogance and pride, which are in ridiculous contrast to my beggar's rags, or my courteous demeanor makes them mistrustful, as none of them succeeds by simple modesty. How my spirit has debased itself during these six months, in order to fit itself to their ways and methods! But everything I learned as hereditary prince of Umbria is valueless in their world, and everything which is of worth in their world I did not learn as a prince. But if I succeed in jesting at my past, my child, who knows but what we may find again a place at a richly decked table! When the pork butcher is raised to the throne there remains no calling for the king save that of court fool.

Alma. Do not enrage yourself so in your fatigue, my father. See, you must take a little nap! I will look for fresh water to quench your thirst and cool your fevered brow.

The King. [*Laying down his head.*] Thank you, my child.

Alma. [*Kissing him.*] My dear father! [*Exit.*]

The King. [*Rises.*] How I have grown to love this beautiful land since I have slunk about it at the risk of my life!— Even the worst disaster always brings good with it. Had I not cared so little for my brave people of Perugia and Umbria, had I not shown myself to them only at carnivals and in fancy dress, God knows, but I might have been recognized long ago! Here comes one of them now!

[*A landed proprietor comes up the road.*]

The King. God greet you, sir! Can you not give me work on your estate?

The Landed Proprietor. You might find much to recompense your work on my estate, but, thank God, my house is guarded

by fierce wolf hounds. And here, you see, I carry a hunting knife, which I can use so well that I should not advise you to come a step nearer me!

The King. Sir, you have no guarantee from Heaven that you may not be compelled at some time to beg for work in order not to go hungry.

The Landed Proprietor. Ha, ha, ha! He who works in order not to go hungry, he is the right kind of worker for me! First comes work and then the hunger. Let him who can live without work starve rather today than tomorrow!

The King. Sir, you must have had wiser teachers than I!

The Landed Proprietor. I should hope so! What have you learned?

The King. The trade of war.

The Landed Proprietor. Thank God, under the rule of King Pietro, whom Heaven long preserve to us, there is little use for that in Umbria any longer. City and country enjoy peace, and at last we live in concord with neighboring states.

The King. Sir, you will find me of use for any work on your estate.

The Landed Proprietor. I will think over the matter. You appear a harmless fellow. I am on my way to my nephew, who has a large house and family at Todi. I am coming back this afternoon. Wait for me here at this spot. Possibly I will take you with me then. [*Exit.*]

The King. "Let him who can live without work starve." What old saws this vermin cherished to endure his miserable existence! And I?—I cannot even feed my child! A lordship was given me by Heaven such as only one in a million can have! And I cannot even give my child food!—My kind father made every hour of the day a festival for me by means of joyous companions, by the wisest teachers, by a host of devoted servants, and my child must shiver with cold and sleep under the hedges by the highway! Have pity on her, O God, and blot her love for miserable me out of her heart! Let happen to me then whatever will, I will bear it lightly!

Alma. [*Rushes out of the bushes with her hair tumbling down.*] Father! Jesu Maria! My father! Help!

The King. [*Clasping her in his arms.*] What is it, child?

A Vagabond. [*Who has followed the maiden, comes forward and stops.*] Ah!—How could I know another had her!

The King. [*Rushes upon him with uplifted stick.*] Hence, you dirty dog!

The Vagabond. I a dirty dog! What are you, then?

The King. [*Striking him.*] That am I! —And that!—And that!

[*The vagabond seeks refuge in flight.*]

Alma. [*Trembling in her father's arms.*] O Father, I was leaning over the spring when that man sprang at me!

The King. [*Breathing hard.*] Calm yourself, my child——

Alma. My poor father! That I, instead of being able to help you, must still need your help!

The King. Today I shall take you back to Perugia. Will throw you at King Pietro's feet——

Alma. Oh, do not let me hear of that again! Can I leave you when death threatens you daily?

The King. It would be better for you to wear man's clothes, instead of a woman's dress, in the future. It is marvel enough that Providence has protected you until today from the horrors that threaten you in our wanderings! You will be safer in man's clothes. A countryman just passed this way. When he comes back he will take me with him and give me work on his place.

Alma. Will you really seek again to put yourself in the service of those so abyssmally beneath you?

The King. What are you saying, my child! Why are they below me?—Besides, it is not quite certain that he will find me worthy of his work. If he asks me to go with him, then follow us, so that I can turn my place under his roof over to you at night.

Alma. No, no! You must not suffer hardship on my account. Have I deserved that of you?

The King. Do you know, my child, that if I had not had you with me, my treasure, as guardian angel, I should very probably be hanging today on a high gallows for highway robbery?—[*He sits down again by the roadside.*] And now, let us tarry here

in patient expectation of the all-powerful man whose return will decide whether our desire to live in communion with mankind is to be fulfilled.

ACT TWO

Scene One

The Workshop of a Ladies' Tailor

[*The* King, *in journeyman's clothes, sits cross-legged on a table, working on a woman's gown of rich material.* Master Pandolfo *bustles into the room.*]

Master Pandolfo. Early to work, Gigi! Early to work! Bravo, Gigi!

The King. The cock has crowed, Master!

Master Pandolfo. Now shake me the other fellows awake. One can work better in company than alone, Gigi! [*Takes the dress out of his hands.*] See here, Gigi! [*He tears the dress.*] Rip! What's the use of early to bed and early to rise if the stitches don't hold? And the buttonholes, Gigi! Did the rats help you with them? I worked for Her Majesty Queen Amelia when her husband was still making mortadella and salmi. Am I to lose her custom now because of your botching? Hey, Gigi?

The King. If my work shames you, turn me out!

Master Pandolfo. How rude, Gigi! Do you think you are still tending pigs at Baschi? Forty years on your back and nothing learned! Go packing out of my house and see where you will find your food, then, you vagabond!

The King. [*Rises and collects the scraps.*] I'll take you at your word, Master!

Master Pandolfo. What the devil, madcap; can't you take a joke? Can I show more love toward my 'prentice than I do when I give him the work which usually the master does? Since you have been with me haven't I allowed you to cut all the garments? The devil take me that I cannot catch the knack of your cutting! But the ladies of Perugia say, "Master Pandolfo, since the old apprentice has been working for you, your work has a genteel cut." But what's the use of a genteel cut if the young ladies tear the stitches out as they dance? You'll never be a journeyman, Gigi, unless you learn to sew. My dear, sweet Gigi, don't you see that I only want what's best for you?

The King. Good, Master Pandolfo, I'll stay with you if from now on, in addition to my keep, you will pay me thirty soldi more a week.

Master Pandolfo. I'll promise you that, Gigi! As true as I stand here, I'll promise you that!—Thirty soldi you want?—Yes, yes! The gown for her Majesty, the Queen, must be ready sewed by noon. Therefore, be industrious, Gigi! Always industrious! [*Exit.*]

[*The* King *draws a long breath after* Master Pandolfo *leaves the room, and then sits down to his work again. After a while,* Princess Alma *puts her head in through the window.*]

Alma. Are you alone, Father?

The King. [*Springing up joyfully.*] My treasure!

[Alma *vanishes and immediately after comes in through the door. She is dressed as a boy in a dark, neat suit of clothes.*]

The King. The master is upstairs with his morning dram, and the journeymen are still asleep. The moments I have with you, my child, indemnify my soul for the days of dull routine. What affectionate conversations I hold with you, and how lovingly and understandingly you answer me! Do not forsake me! It is a new crime I commit in asking this of you; but see, I am a weak man!

Alma. Things will soon be better with us now, Father. The old notary, whose errand-boy I became two months ago, already lets me copy all his documents. Next week he is going to take me to court with him, in order that I may take down the case instead of him.—O my father, if only the death sentence which, now that we are in Perugia again, places you in greater danger than ever before, could be lifted from your head!—My feminine ignorance of politics prevents me conjecturing whether they will raise you to the throne again. But they should honor you as more than a king. There must be something godlike about you when, in spite of your degradation, you are able to fill one with happiness as you do me! What a wealth of happiness you would have to give if your fetters

were removed. Thousands then would contend for you, and you would no longer envy any king the weight of his crown!

The King. Do not talk further about me. I must wait in obscurity until my hour is come.—But you, my child, do you not feel deadly unhappy under the burden of your work?—Isn't your master disagreeable when he needs someone upon whom to vent his bad temper?

Alma. But don't you see what good spirits I am in, Father? The people I serve know how to value education and culture. You, on the contrary, must live with a brood of men whose daily habits must torment your soul, even without their knowledge or desire. I see you grind your teeth at this or that retort. I see how your throat contracts with disgust at mealtimes. Oh, forgive my words! They are unmindful of your smarting wounds.

The King. [*Whimsically.*] Only think, my child, the result of these unusual circumstances is that I am cherished by Master Pandolfo as his most industrious worker. At Baschi, where I tended cattle, I made a shed behind the stables my sleeping place. I used to lie there every morning on my back, following my dreams until the sun stood over me in the zenith. That's the reason the farmer discharged me. Here I sleep with three common fellows, and, therefore, am the first to rise and the last to go to bed. Personally, I do not sleep as well in the company of men as I do in the company of beasts. I never dreamed such an industrious worker was concealed within me! Work serves me as a kind of refuge. And then the beautiful hues of the heavy velvet, the sheen of the gold brocade! They refresh my soul and I long for them as for a vivifying drink. And then Master Pandolfo's insight discovered in me at once a gift which astonishes me highly, and which, to be candid, I could not give up lightly. He found I was better able than any of his workmen, better able than himself even, to cut the stuff for the ladies' dresses so as to bring out the figure to the best advantage. For example, that doublet you wear I should have cut quite differently than did that miserable botcher whose shears were not worthy to touch such splendid cloth.

Alma. Oh, silence, Father! How can you jest so callously at your unhappy fate!

The King. [*Passionately.*] Do not mock me with flattery, my child!—Fate jests at me and not I at it!

Alma. [*Soothingly.*] Beloved father, you remain a king, no matter what you must do in this world.

The King. In your loving heart, yes!—And, therefore, your father, with loving despotism, opposes your life's happiness by crowding out of your heart that longing for a man which must be awakening in you at your age.—Your father's egotistical folly has lost you rank and property, now it deprives you of the highest rights of life—those which the creatures of the wilderness share with mankind and which may make existence in a hut, as well as on a throne, a gift of the gods! What madness made me test my strength against the flood of the San Margherita brook, instead of invading Umbria by war, setting the city on fire at its four corners and snatching the crown with my own hands from the glowing ruins!—But that was only the continuation of past folly!

Alma. [*Weeping.*] Heaven have mercy on my foolish soul! How was it possible for me so to grieve you!

The King. In misfortune people hurt each other without knowledge or desire, just as truly as in happiness each one brings joy to the other unwittingly. Do not make him who is judged suffer for it. You must go, my child; I hear the workmen shouting and tramping about upstairs.

Alma. [*Kissing him.*] Tomorrow morning early! [*Exit.*]

[*The* KING *takes up his work. Then the three journeymen come in, and, sitting down on separate tables on the other side of the room, prepare for work.*]

Michele. Gigi, if you get up before cockcrow again I'll break your nose the next night while you sleep. Then go to the women and see if you can succeed with them!

The King. It would please you well to attack a sleeping man. But take care of your own bones at it, or perhaps you might not rise at all the next day!

Noe. Well said, Gigi! Tell us quickly

more of your warlike deeds, that we may be afraid of you.

The King. I haven't time. If your ears itch for tales of heroic deeds, tell how you stole the parson's geese at Bavagna.

Battiste. Our patron saint defend us! Usually, you are as tame and sneaking as if your nail had never crushed a louse, and today you would like to spit all three of us at once on your needle.

The King. Let me be in peace, then! A hollow tooth is hurting me. That's the reason I left the sleeping room so early.

Noe. Tell the truth, Gigi! Wasn't the page here just now who brings you the glowing love letters from the lady for whom you cut the yellow silk dress?

The King. Do I concern myself with your love letters?

Michele. You concern yourself with entirely different things! You get up right after midnight to practice being a lick-spittle and a trimmer! You get the master to give you the journeymen's work and divide the apprentice's work among us! You are a pest in the house!

Battiste. Apprentice, bring us the morning soup!

[*The* KING *leaves the workroom.*]

Noe. He's lacking in the upper story; I am sorry for him. He must have been some sort of bootcleaner for a gentleman of quality. That moved his brain out of place in his skull.

Battiste. Did you ever see a soldier who would let himself be kicked about so by journeymen tailors?

Noe. My mother was a country girl; I tell that to anybody who asks me; I don't act as if I had been bed servant to the Holy Father!

Michele. I'll tell you why the lad is so stupid. Each of us has knocked about the world, often with not enough to eat. But if he opens his mouth out comes a stream of curses profane enough to turn one's stomach. Earth is ashamed at having brought forth such a monster; then Heaven is ashamed to have let its light fall upon him; then Hell is ashamed that it has not yet swallowed him! You will see!

[*The* KING *returns with four wooden spoons and a pot of soup, which he sets before the journeymen.*]

Michele. Get out, you beast! You can lick our spoons when we have had enough!

The King. [*Strives with himself, seeking to master his anger, then strikes his brow.*] Oh, a curse upon this king who hinders me from allowing myself to be thrashed by this rascal! Oh, a curse upon the king who hinders me crushing this rascal, whom I understand better than he understands me! Oh, a curse upon the king who hinders me from being a man like other men! Oh, a triple curse upon the king!

[*The journeymen spring up in horror.*]

Michele. Did you hear? He cursed the king! He cursed the king!

Battiste and Noe. [*Together.*] He has cursed the king!

Michele. Seize him! Hold him fast!—Master Pandolfo!—Master Pandolfo!—Knock in his teeth!

Master Pandolfo. [*Rushing in.*] Get to work, lads! Why are you fighting so early in the morning? Are you mad?

The Journeymen. [*Holding the* KING *by the arms.*] He has cursed the king!—"Curse the king!" he cried; "A triple curse upon the king!"

The King. [*Submitting indifferently, to force.*] A triple curse upon the king! Then let the king's head fall under the headsman's axe.

The Journeymen. Listen to him, Master Pandolfo!

The King. [*To himself.*] My poor child!

Master Pandolfo. Bind his hands behind his back! Cursing our dear, good King Pietro! "Let King Pietro's head fall under the headsman's axe!" Bring ropes! Take the dog to court! This vagabond will lose me my best customers! The head of King Pietro, who pays his bills more promptly than any king before him!

SCENE TWO

The Court Room

[*The presiding judge and two associates sit at the middle table; the attorney-general for the crown occupies a raised seat to the right; the counsel for the defense occupies a similar seat to the left. Further forward, to the right, is the clerk of the court, with* PRINCESS ALMA *as his amanuensis. She has the court records in front of her. Forward, on the left, are halberdiers*

guarding the door to the adjoining room. The back of the hall is filled with spectators.]

The Presiding Judge. I open the session in the name of his exalted Majesty, the king.—According to his request, I grant the privilege of speaking first to the counsel for the prosecution, Signor Silvio Andrevitti, Doctor of Canonical and Civil Law and Attorney-General for the Crown.

The Attorney-General. Under the rule of our sublime and beloved King Pietro, it has become the custom in our city of Perugia to permit the citizen to be present in court during a trial, in order to strengthen his confidence in the unshakable incorruptibility of our judgments. In view of the offence which is to be tried here today, I venture to suggest to the court that the spectators here assembled be excluded from our session, in order that they may be protected from looking too deeply into the degradation of human nature.

The Presiding Judge. The well-considered suggestion of the honorable Attorney-General shall be followed.

[*The halberdiers, with crossed pikes, force the spectators quietly out of the hall.*]

The Presiding Judge. Our sublime King Pietro has made the wise and just provision that any poor defendant, no matter what his nationality, be supplied with an advocate at the cost of the state. The worthy Signor Corrado Ezzelino, Master and Doctor of both Civil and Canonical Law, has declared himself ready to serve in this capacity today. Now, I grant the privilege of speaking, at his special request, to our worthy clerk of the court, Signor Matteo Nerli.

The Clerk of the Court. Honorable and wise judges, a cramp which lames my right hand, the result of long years of untiring industry in the service of the law, does not permit me the honor of taking down the minutes of to-day's session unassisted. By my side you see my apprenticed clerk, a lad who has awakened my affection, and who, despite his youth, has shown an unusual love of the law. I ask that he be permitted to keep the minutes, under the direction and supervision of his master.

The Presiding Judge. Your wish is granted, Master Matteo. The witnesses who were called for to-day's session have all appeared in person. Conduct the defendant thither.

[*The halberdiers bring in the* King *from the neighboring room.* Princess Alma *startles at sight of him, but collects herself and arranges her writing materials.*]

The Presiding Judge. You call yourself Ludovicus and were employed formerly in tending cattle at Baschi. You are accused of the *crimen læsæ majestatis,* which was visited with severe penalties in the unperishable code of our great predecessors, the ancient Romans; the crime of injuring majesty, or, in other words, the insult to the holy person of the king. Do you acknowledge yourself guilty of this offence?

The King. Yes.

The Clerk of the Court. [*To* Alma.] He said "yes." Write it down, my lad; write it down accurately!

The Presiding Judge. According to the unanimous testimony of four unprejudiced witnesses, your words were, "A triple curse upon the king! Let the king's head fall under the headsman's axe!"

The King. Those were my words.

The Clerk of the Court. "Those were my words!" Joseph and Mary, a blot! Lad, has the devil gotten into you to-day

The Presiding Judge. What have you to advance in your own behalf?

The King. Nothing.

Michele. He has nothing to advance! Did you hear? He has nothing to advance!

Master Pandolfo. He spat out his terrible curse in miserable revenge against me! He wanted to bring my business and my whole family into disrepute.

The Presiding Judge. Silence on the witness bench!—Now, what have you to say in your own defense?

The King. Nothing.—Next to the majesty of God, the majesty of the king stands highest in this world. The majesty of God suffers as little from human curses as the majesty of the king. Can the majesty of God be dimmed by vulgar humanity saying, "We believe in you no longer"? Can the majesty of the king be dimmed by people saying, "We will obey no longer"? Who would assert that as possible?—God wandered in lowly form upon this earth, and

the rabble believed it had put him to death. And so the rabble may believe it has banished the king; he remains where he was. If they call to him, "Let your head fall under the headsman's axe," it does him no harm. Therefore, although next to blaspheming against God, blaspheming against the king is the most execrable crime—a crime of which my words have made me guilty, as I acknowledge openly—it appears to me that the matter should be such an indifferent and trifling affair to the king that he should not need to revenge it. At the same time, it seems to me too frightful for the rabble to presume to be able ever to atone for it. The rabble, indeed, possesses no higher power than that over life and death, and, indeed, cannot know whether the miserable sinner would not welcome death, no matter how painful, as a liberation from a thousand sorrows. These, therefore, are the reasons why I hold that the judges before whom I now stand can execute no punishment upon me for my crime. [*General murmur of dissent.*] Now, let me, wise and honorable judges, name the grounds which make it your holy duty to judge me according to the greatest severity of the law.

Noe. I told you the fellow was completely crazy!

The Presiding Judge. [*To the witness bench.*] Silence! [*To the* KING.] Speak further.

The King. The Majesty of the king, as I have proved commensurate to human reason, can receive no injury from my words. But, unfortunately, next to faith in the All-Goodness of Providence, faith in the majesty of the king is the highest and holiest possession of the common people. That which the sons of earth have known since all time as eternal truths, against which none, be he master or slave, sins unpunished, that stands under God's holy protection. Everything which they value, everything that affects their property and the prosperity of their daily work, *that* they enjoy with childish confidence in their king's protection. In their king the common people recognize the likeness of their own fortune, and who smirches this likeness robs them of the courage to work and of peace by night. I am far more guilty of this crime than human justice fathoms. It is impossible for the punishment hanging over me to approach the weight of my crime. Even should it cost my life, let it be what you will, I shall accept it from the hands of you judges as a grace of God.

The Presiding Judge. The grace of your lord, our dear and blessed king, has placed a learned advocate at your side.—The honorable Signor Corrado Ezzelino, Master and Doctor of Civil and Canonical Law, may address the court.

The Advocate for the Defense. [*Rising.*] My exalted, righteous, worthy and honorable judges, permit me first to speak a word concerning our brave and honest fellow-citizen, the master-tailor Casare Pandolfo. We see him here to-day on the witness bench deeply bowed down as the result of the abominable crime which has taken place under his roof. We all of us recognize the staunchness of his principles; we all—all of us here assembled—know the excellence of his work. I believe myself able, therefore, to assure Master Pandolfo, in the name of all of us, that not one of us would think of associating him, even in the slightest degree, with the frightful crime which happened under his roof.—Now, concerning the defendant, whom it is my sad duty to defend: Apparently, he is an entirely disreputable scamp, more worthy of our deepest scorn than of being judged in the normal fashion according to the wise provision of the Roman code. Permit, O judges, the words of the text, "Thou shalt not cast thy pearls before swine," to be followed in the case of this outcast from our dear commonweal. Because of his unexampled spiritual and moral degeneracy, it would be impossible for the defendant to know how to appreciate at its true worth the honor done him by weighing his case in the scales of justice; therefore, I request you, wise and honorable judges, in order not to belittle the dignity of our calling, to let the punishment rest at flogging. Should punishment by flogging appear inadequate, wise and honorable judges, possibly punishment by flogging might be augmented by three days' exposure in the pillory in the market place of Perugia.

The Presiding Judge. I grant the floor to the Attorney-General, our worthy Signor Silvio Andrevitti, Doctor of Civil and Canonical Law.

The Attorney-General. [*Who during the whole proceedings has been groaning, yawning and wriggling about in his seat.*] Honorable judges! As the worthy Signor Corrado Ezzelino has rightly and forcibly expressed it in his excellent defence, the defendant is a disreputable scamp, an outcast from our dear human community, an individual of unexampled moral degeneracy, in whom I cannot deny there is a certain mental craftiness, or, to speak more plainly, a certain peasant's cunning. His own words which he has spoken here are evidence of this peasant's cunning, as is also the fact that, with the intention of confusing our power of judgment, by creating a favorable impression, he has not attempted to deny his deed. When, however, an individual from the lowest depths of human degeneracy commits a crime such as this, which cries to Heaven, then that individual must be looked upon no longer as a human being, but as a wild beast; and such a one, as the defendant himself cleverly has shown, with the intention of tricking our judgment, is the most pernicious enemy of our commonwealth, for the protection of which I and you, you judges, have been placed here. Such a wild beast, by reason of his baseness, as well as on account of the danger he is to the community, deserves that he be destroyed by death and that his tracks be obliterated from the earth!

The Presiding Judge. Defendant Ludovicus, what more have you to say?

The King. Nothing.

The Presiding Judge. The witnesses are excused!—The court stands adjourned until the passing of sentence.

[*The witnesses, the judges and the* ATTORNEY-GENERAL *leave the chamber.*]

The Clerk of the Court. [*Beating his head, to* ALMA, *who sits bathed in tears over the minutes.*] Help me, holy Mary, Mother of God! The booby, with his foolishness, has blubbered all over the minutes! Not a letter can be read! The leaves are all stuck together!

Alma. [*Sobbing.*] O my God, he is innocent! I know that he is innocent!

The Clerk of the Court. Why should it worry you whether he is innocent or guilty? Is it your head or his head they are going to cut off?

The King. [*Who stands alone in the middle of the room, aside, but with emphasis.*] My words were, "And so at last the king's head shall fall under the headsman's axe in the market place of Perugia!"

The Clerk of the Court. There, you see how innocent he is!

Alma. [*Who has risen and prays earnestly, with hands folded across her breast.*] Lord God in Heaven, Thou who hast compassion upon all the poor and miserable, preserve us from this!

The Clerk of the Court. See now, you are a brave lad and have your heart in the right place! I shall certainly not bring you again soon to a sitting of the court. You must rewrite the whole minutes from memory at home. You will learn more from that than if you studied through the whole *corpus juris!*

The Advocate for the Defense. [*Who, after the judges have left the chamber, has taken a package of bread and butter, a flask and a glass from his robe. He places the flask and glass in front of him, and then comes forward, busy with his breakfast.*] Now, Gigi, wasn't that a Ciceronian defence that I made for you? But what do you know about Cicero! You will allow me to breakfast, of course. At first, I had the intention of sprinkling my defence with a little *curiculum vitae,* a moving description of your cattle tending, etc. But, to be frank, Gigi, I don't believe that either would have helped you much with those [*pointing*] dunderheads out there!

The King. You have my thanks for your pains, worthy Doctor Ezzelino.

[*The judges return from the council-chamber and resume their places.*]

The Presiding Judge. [*Reading from his notes.*] The defendant, Ludovicus, recently a tailor's apprentice in Perugia, and formerly employed in the tending of cattle in the village of Baschi, is accused of the crime of blasphemy against the holy person of the king, and is found guilty of this crime upon the evidence of unanimous testimony, as well as by his own admission. In consideration of his previous good character, as well as in consideration of his free confession, the defendant is sentenced to two years' incarceration ——

Alma. [*Gives a muffled cry.*]

The Clerk of the Court. Young fellow, will you hold your tongue while the judge is speaking!

The Presiding Judge. —— and, furthermore, to ten years' deprivation of all the rights and honors of citizenship, as well as to banishment from the city of Perugia for the whole term of his life, under pain of death in case of his return.

The Clerk of the Court. [*To* ALMA.] Write, my lad! Write! This is the most important of all!

The Presiding Judge. [*Continuing his reading.*] In view of the important fact that the defendant has not shown the least trace of regret for his deed, the sentence provides that he shall spend his two years' incarceration in the most rigid solitary confinement.—Given in the name of the king, on the third day of the month of August, in the year of our Lord one thousand four hundred and ninety-nine. [*Turning to the guards.*] Take away the prisoner! [*Rising. To the court.*] I hereby declare to-day's session closed.

ACT THREE

SCENE ONE

A Prison

[*To the left, the cell door. To the right, a barred window. At the back, a folding bench, fastened against the wall.*]

The King. [*Sings to a lute.*]

With an ivy wreath my brow was dressed,
  In my locks there sparkled the dew;
A pair of falcons above my crest
  Wove circles in the blue

From the balcony, in joyous vein,
  My mother beckoned and smiled;
At e'en thy father will come again,
  In victor's garb, my child.

[*He leans the lute against the wall, sinks down upon a stool at the back of the cell and plaits a straw mat.*]—I am thirsty.—Is it really so late in the day?—How time passes here! [*He rises and looks curiously upward through the window.*] By the Lord, the sun is beginning to glide along the south wall of the tower!—Time for the water jug! [*He fetches an earthen jug from the corner and stands expectantly before the door.*]—He will soon come!—Did I ever enjoy a drink while I was king as I do the fresh draught of water which I have received daily at this hour for the last twelfthmonth? I believe it's a stroke of good fortune that I was never in jail during my own reign.

[*The door opens noisily and a rough voice outside calls, "Water jug!" The* KING *hastily sets the jug outside the door and returns inside the cell. The door slams shut, but is reopened immediately and the jailer enters.*]

The Jailer. Zounds and death, Gigi, how did you smash the jug? Silence, you dog! There's a hole in the jug. It was sound yesterday. I'll pitch into you so that your face will bleed! You take me for your servant because lately I haven't watched you so closely. You'll get it now so that your hair will turn white! Show your work!

[*The* KING *produces the unfinished straw mat.*]

The Jailer. That your day's work! You won't get a bit of bread until you finish five times that amount! [*Throwing the mat down at his feet.*] There!—Now I'll inspect your cell. Look out for yourself! I won't let you out of this hole alive!

[*Putting his hands behind him, he goes step by step along the wall from door to window, examining it from top to bottom, and turning around now and then at the prisoner, who stands motionless in the middle of the cell.*] What does that spider web mean up there?—The fourth disciplinary punishment for eight days! [*Turning around.*] You still know the seven disciplinary punishments by heart?—Hey, Gigi?

The King. I know them by heart.

The Jailer. First disciplinary punishment?

The King. Deprivation of privileges.

The Jailer. I'll smash that lute of yours to bits; you fritter away your working hours with it!—Second disciplinary punishment?

The King. Deprivation of work.

The Jailer. Then see how you will spend your time! In eight days you won't be able to stand on your legs!—Third disciplinary punishment?

The King. Deprivation of a soft bed at

nights.—My bed is as hard as if it were stuffed with pebbles!

The Jailer. Silence! This rascal would like to sleep in the hay.—Fourth disciplinary punishment?

The King. Reduction of rations.

The Jailer. Bread and water from to-day for eight days!—Do you hear?!—Fifth disciplinary punishment?

The King. Imprisonment in darkness.

The Jailer. Sixth disciplinary punishment?

The King. Imprisonment in fetters.

The Jailer. By that you must understand you are chained all awry, so that after the first hour all the devils you have in your body say good-by to you! Seventh disciplinary punishment?

The King. Flogging.

The Jailer. [*Having reached the window.*] You shall shed your hide here yet! You, you thief, shall clamber up and down the Jacob's ladder until you fall dead. [*He passes in front of the* KING, *leaves the cell and shuts the door from the outside.*]

The King. [*Looks after him in surprise. Then quite calmly, with quiet deliberation, he turns toward the door.*] What does it mean?—Where have I made a mistake?—For a whole year I believed that in the course of a year I had educated this beast into a human being. Suddenly, after all that trouble, he drops back again into the animal kindom.—Or did I dream?—It is impossible entirely that the jug should have been broken. I drank out of it this morning. He will break it now outside and then show me the pieces. Will he let me go thirsty today? Will he let me thirst?—I fear worse!—At any rate I shall receive him with a look that will make his eyes sink to the ground. [*Bracing himself.*] Help me, kingly majesty, in order that the fellow may realize his baseness of his own accord!—[*Listening.*] He's coming!—A duel without weapons, man against man!

[*The door opens noisily.* PRINCESS ALMA *enters, clad as in the preceding act and carrying a jug with both her hands. The door closes loudly behind her.*]

The King. [*With the fright of immoderate joy.*] Alma?! My child!—Oh, beastly spite!

Alma. O Father, I cannot embrace you now! I bring you this jug of wine.

The King. [*Struggling for breath, with both hands at his breast.*] Oh, satanic cruelty!—[*Takes the jug from her and sets it to one side.*] Whence come you, my child? For twelve months I've thirsted for a sight of you! You are living yet, you are whole and well. Speak, how is it with you among miserable mankind?

Alma. We have only a few minutes! At last I have been able to bribe the jailer, and from now on he will let me visit you once a week. Tell me quickly how I can lighten your sufferings.

The King. My sufferings?—Yes! What a father I am to throw my child unprotected upon the world! That is my sorrow!—Otherwise, I thank God daily that He has separated me from mankind by these six-foot walls, so that I am safe from them!

Alma. You can see from my appearance, Father, how good people are to me. I am still in service of the notary. Only tell me what I may bring you to strengthen you! What frightful torments you must have endured here!

The King. No, no, my child! Do not bring me anything unfamiliar into this solitude! You don't know how time passes here with the speed of the wind. In the beginning I scratched seven hundred and thirty marks on that wall, to have the daily joy of rubbing one of them out. But soon I had to blot them out by the week or by the month. And how I see with dread how quickly they grow less and less, so that the last will soon be gone and I will have to seek refuge once more under overhanging rocks and contend with wolves for their booty!—But do not let my words sadden you! You cannot guess how the jailer prepared me for your coming!

Alma. I think with silent horror of how fiendishly he will torment you!

The King. How you imagine things! To do that he would have to be more than the weak earthworm he is. No cruelty can keep pace with my callousness. Do you know, he has shed tears of compassion here without having heard the least complaint from me! Who could be so degenerate as not to be thankful when his better self finds unexpected recognition!—He could

not help begrudging me the joy of seeing you again, my child. But the cowardly anxiety which springs from his calling is responsible for that. The poor man is so jealous of the ridiculous little authority vested in him by his bunch of keys that the kindness he has shown me to-day makes him afraid of becoming entirely superfluous. But didn't you suffer need in order to buy the good will of this rascal?

Alma. Speak not of me, Father. Time is passing and I don't know how I can help you!

The King. Really, I don't know either! Were I an abler man, my fate might perhaps seem more pitiable to me. Poor as I am, I only tremble at the moment when those iron doors shall protect me no longer, when those barred windows shall prevent them reaching me, when I shall stand again among people with whom I have no mutual understanding and from whose activities I am excluded more than ever by the sentence of the law.—If you only knew how painlessly this solitude heals the gaping wounds of the soul. The judge thought he was adding to my punishment when he sentenced me to solitary confinement. How deeply I have thanked him that I do not have to live here in association with other men!

Alma. [*Bursting into tears.*] Lord God in Heaven! Then you don't want to see me here again!

The King. [*Caressingly.*] I repay your sacrifice with discontent and ill humor. Thoughts become heavy and sluggish when a man continues talking to himself day in and day out.—Only this I ask of you; when freedom is restored to me, leave me to my fate—not forever, only until I show myself worthy of your greatness of soul.

Alma. Oh, nevermore! Do not ask me ever to leave you! It is impossible that the future should be as bad as the past!

The King. Not for you. I believe that gladly.

Alma. Melancholy has mastered you in this gloom. Your proud heart is almost ready to break. Nothing can be read in your face of the quiet peace you pretend to feel.

The King. I have not seen my face for a year, but I can imagine how ugly it has grown. How my looks must wound your feelings!

Alma. Oh, do not talk like that, father!

The King. But you know my imperturbable nature. And now you come in, the only thing to make my happiness complete. It is only to reward you richly and splendidly that I would become a king again.

Alma. I hear the jailer! Tell me how I can lighten your sufferings!

The King. [*Sinks down on the stool exhausted, half to himself.*] What do I lack? How frightful this prison would become if the pleasures of life were admitted here! How can I desire here a beautiful woman, where I cannot even conjure up a recollection of beauty! My couch there is shut during the day. There is no other resting-place, and I lie down there at night as weary as if I had ploughed an acre. And in the morning the clanging bell wakes me from dreams more serene than those I dreamed as a child. [*As the door is opened.*] When you see me again, my child, you will hear no more complaints. You shall feel as happy with me as if you were outside in your sunny world. Farewell!

Alma. Farewell, Father! [*She leaves the cell. The door clangs behind her.*]

The King. A whole long year yet!—[*He goes toward the wall.*] I will just count the marks again and see how many remain to be rubbed out.

Scene Two

Night—A Waste

[*Enter the* King, Princess Alma, *with her father's lute on her back, and a circus rider.*]

The King. Have we much further to go, brother, before we come to the place where the beggars' fair is to be held?

The Circus Rider. We shall be there by midnight, at the latest. The real fair does not begin until then. This must be the first time you have made this pilgrimage to the gallows?

The King. It is only a few moons since we joined the strollers, but, nevertheless, we have danced at many a witches' sabbath.

The Circus Rider. It seems to me, brother, somewhere you have unlearned

marching. Otherwise you are a robust enough fellow.

The King. [*Sitting down on a boulder.*] My heart beats against my ribs like a caged bird of prey. The road leads uphill, that takes my breath!

The Circus Rider. We have plenty of time.—Your boy, brother, is very much better on his legs. It's a pity about him! With me he could learn something more profitable than singing street ballads to the lute. Everywhere, that's considered not much better than begging. Let him go with me, brother, if only for half a year! At any rate, it would not be worse for him than following in your footsteps, and I'll make a rider out of him after whom the circus managers will break their necks!

The King. Don't take me for an ass, dear brother; how can you make my boy succeed as a circus rider when you yourself must trudge afoot!

The Circus Rider. You are as suspicious as if you had kegs full of gold at home, while from all appearances you don't remember when you had warm food last! You won't get anywhere that way! Tonight at the beggars' fair we shall meet at least half a dozen circus managers. They gather there to look for artists to appear with them. Then you will see, you poor devil, how they will contend for me and how one will outbid the other! Thank God, I am not so unknown as you, you gutter singers! And if I get my job again, I shall have horses enough for your merry boy to break his neck the first day, if he has the mind!

The King. Tell me, brother, does one find theatre managers too at the beggars' fair?

The Circus Rider. Theatre managers too, certainly. The theatre managers come there from all over the country. Where else would they get their dancers and their clowns!—Frankly, brother, it seems very doubtful to me your getting an engagement. You don't look as if you could act a farce.

The King. But there is a higher art, called tragedy!

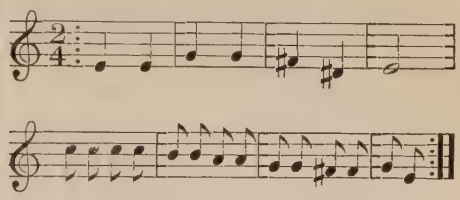
The Circus Rider. Tragedy, yes, I have heard that name!—I understand nothing about that art, dear brother. I only know that it is miserable poor pay.—[*To* Alma.] Now, my brave lad, doesn't your mouth water for better fodder?—Do you want to learn circus riding with me?

The King. [*Getting up.*] Forward, brother, do not let us miss the beggars' fair. Fortune only offers us her hand once a year! [*Exeunt.*]

Scene Three

[*Night. The gallows looms in the background. Forward, to the left, is a gigantic boulder, beneath a gnarled oak, which serves the performers as a stage. In front of it flickers a huge bonfire, about which are gathered the spectators, men, women and children, in fantastic raiment.*]

Chorus



Both in town and country beds,
With their windows tightly fastened, honest folk are drowsing.
Those with no home for their heads
Dance with merry spectres 'neath the gallows tree carousing.
Exiles from the sun's bright light,
Fortune's tracks we still can follow in the dark obscurely,
And are lords in our own sight
While in heaven the friendly stars twinkle quite demurely.

A Theatre Manager. [*In a bass voice to an actor.*] Show me what you have learned, my worthy young friend. *Hic Rhodus hic salta!* What is your act?

The Actor. I act the fool, honored master.

The Theatre Manager. Then act the fool, young friend, but act him well! *Difficile est satiram non scribere!* My public is used only to the best!

The Actor. I will give you a sample of my art at once.

The Theatre Manager. If you find favor in my eyes, young friend, you shall have a hundred soldi a month. *Pacta exacta—*

boni amici! Go, young friend, and give your proof.

[*The* Actor *mounts the rock. He is received with hand-clapping and cries of "bravo" by the spectators.*]

The Actor. [*Breaks first into laughter, then speaks the following lines, accompanying each couplet with a different kind of titter.*]

Count Onofrio was a man
As stupid as a ram,
And he had daughters seven
He wanted paired up even.
Their way no suitor bent his legs.
Rotten eggs! Rotten eggs!

The Auditors. [*Have interrupted this effort several times with hisses and whistles. At the last words they pelt the* Actor *with clumps of earth, while with shrill whistling they repeat the words.*] Rotten eggs! Rotten eggs!

The Theatre Manager. [*Blaring out above the rest of the noise.*] Down with the rascal! A page! The Lord God created him in wrath! *Alea est jacta!*

[*The* Actor *leaves the rock.*]

[*Chorus.*]

Nor believe not, human brood,
That pursuit of idle dreams fills our whole existence;
Lovers' ways are somewhat crude
When the night wind dead men's bones rattles with persistence!

[*The* King, Princess Alma *and a* Procuress *appear on the scene.*]

The Procuress. Now, ballad singer, how much will you take for that pretty boy of yours?—Listen to the pleasant clang of the goldpieces in my pocket!

The King. Just now a circus rider wanted to buy him from me. Leave me and my boy in peace! I didn't come to the beggars' fair for this. Besides, what can you want with my boy!

The Procuress. Don't think I am so stupid, ballad singer, that I can't see that your boy is a girl! The sweet child will find a mother in me, more full of love for her than anyone in the wide, wide world. [*To* Alma.] Don't tremble so, my pretty little dove! I won't eat you! When one grows up with such a pretty figure and such a round, rosy face, with fresh cherry lips and dark glowing eyes, one sleeps beneath silken covers and not in the open fields. You will not have to play the lute with me. Only to be charming. What pleasanter life can sprightly young blood desire? You will meet ministers of state and barons at my house; you will only have to choose. Have you ever been kissed by a real baron? That tastes better than a tramp's unshaven face!—Look here, ballad singer! Here are two unclipped ducats. The girl belongs to me! It's a bargain!

The King. Go snick up, you and your gold!—[*To* Alma.] That fool woman, in her stupidity, really takes you for a girl in boy's clothes! Why aren't you? If you were a girl, there would be no better opportunity than this to rid yourself of the bristly ballad singer! There is nothing worse than passing 'round the hat for pennies. Perhaps you have already gathered pennies thrown you by the compassionate foster-daughters of this worthy dame! They always have a chance of being forced again into the exalted ranks of burghers' society as worthy members. Our star is not in the ascendant.

The Procuress. [*To* Alma.] Don't allow this vagabond to set your head whirling, for Heaven's sake, my dear! You don't know how cozy my house is! The whole day you can amuse yourself with a band of the liveliest companions. If the ballad singer won't sell you to me, let's run away from him. Don't be afraid of him! You will be as safe under my protection as if you were surrounded by a whole army corps.

Alma. [*Wrenching herself from the* Procuress' *grasp.*] I will speak to him. [*Goes from her to the* King. *With trembling voice.*] Do you remember, my father, why we came to this beggars' fair?

The King. I know, my child. [*He mounts the rock and is received with dry coughs. Then he speaks in a clear tone, but with inward emotion.*]

I am the ruler over all this land,
By God anointed, but by no one known!
And should I shriek until the mountains bent
That I am ruler over all this land,
The very birds would chirp a mock at me!
What profit then is this my kingly thought
When hungering I snap with eager teeth,

As in the winter months the starving beasts?
But not to make a plaint of all my woes
Come I, my folk, to you!

The Spectators. [*Break into shrill laughter, applaud stormily and cry loudly.*] Da capo! Da capo!

The King. [*Anxiously and with embarrassment.*] Kind audience! My specialty on the stage is great and serious tragedy!

The Spectators. [*Laughing loudly.*] Bravo! Bravo!

The King. [*With all the force of his soul.*] What I have just told you is to me the dearest, the holiest thing that I have kept in the depths of my soul until now!

The Spectators. [*Give vent to a new storm of approval, from out of which the words can be plainly heard.*] A remarkable comedian!—An unusual character actor!

The Theatre Manager. [*Who has mounted a rock back of the crowd in order to hear better.*] Finish your monologue, my dear young friend! Or does your poor brain harbor only these few crumbs?—*Si tacuisses, philosophus mansisses!*

The King. Very well, then! But I ask you from my heart, kind audience, to give my words the earnest meaning which belongs to them! How shall I succeed in moving your hearts, if you do not believe the plaints which come from my mouth!

The Spectators. [*Laugh and applaud enthusiastically.*] What a pose he assumes!—And such droll grimaces!—Go on with your farce!

The Theatre Manager. [*Hissing.*] Children! Children! Nothing is worse for the actor than applause! If you succeed in making him overvalue himself, the poor rogue will be capable only of the lowest kind of trash! *Odi profanum vulgus et arceo!* [*To the* KING.] Continue, my son! It seems to me as if your parodies might amuse my enlightened public!

The King. [*Seeking by every means to invest his speech with earnestness.*]
I am the ruler! To your knees with you!
What mean these bursts of mad, indecent mirth!
'Tis my own fault that here, in this my realm,
None knows me more. My sentinels slumber,
My doughty warriors serve another's wage.
I lack that highest earthly might, the gold!
Still, ever yet, was there a rightful king
Who spent his time in counting out his coin?
That task he graciously accords to slaves!
The farthing, soiled with sweat of tradesmen's toil,
Was never struck with an intent to smirch
The hands of those anointed of the Lord!

The Spectators. [*Breaking out into the wildest laughter.*] Da capo!—Bravo—Da capo!

A Theatre Manager. This man is a brilliant satirist! A second Juvenal!

The King. [*As before.*]
I am the ruler!—He of you who doubts
Let him stand forth!—I'll prove my claim to him!
I was not wont before to praise myself,
But now the world has robbed me of that pride.
To him who wears a dagger at his hip
I'll teach the art of sinking it with grace
Into his foeman's breast; so that the duel,
From a rude spectacle of sweat and blood,
Becomes as pleasant as an elfen dance
And even death puts on a sweeter garb!—
I am the ruler!—From the herd of barbs
Bring me the wildest of unbroken steeds;
Nor trouble you with saddle nor with bit;
Let him but feel my heels press in his flanks
He'll pant beneath me in the Spanish gait
And from that time be tractable to ride.
I am the ruler! Come unto the feast!
The world is distant with its petty ills,
The evening star illuminates our meal,
From distant arcades mellow songs arise.
The guest may wander through the twilight green
Where, from the shelter of a plashing fall,
The sportive nymphs will lure him with their wiles.
I am the king! Go fetch a maiden here!
Let her be chaste as is the morning dew!
I'll not awake her innocent alarms;
I come a beggar with an empty scrip;
Six steps away from her I'll stand. Warn her
'Gainst wiles of Satan! 'Ere a star grows pale
I'll move, not only body, but her soul!
Bring me the truest wife among them all!
She soon shall doubt if loathing or if faith

Is greater pander to the lusts of flesh
And, doubtingly, shall offer me her lips.
I am the king! What child is here as small
In hands and feet, or even in his joints!
With scorn I look upon you as you laugh,
Your feet may jig, your hands may fan the air,
The brains within your skulls are very stale!
So be it!—Will the slimmest maiden here
Venture to dance with me in trial of skill?
She never knew the bloody task of war
And all her joints are quite as small as mine.
[*As nobody offers, to* ALMA.] Reach me a torch, my child!

[ALMA *takes a glowing brand from the bonfire and hands it to the* KING. *Then, standing at the foot of the rock, she plays a melody on her lute.*]

[*The* KING *gracefully and with dignity dances a few steps of a courtly torch dance, then throws the glowing brand back into the fire.*]

[*The* SPECTATORS *give vent to prolonged applause.*]

The Actor. [*Rising from amid the spectators, in a tone of parody.*] I am the monarch over all this land——

The Spectators. Down with the barber's assistant. He has no appreciation! Strike him to earth!

The Theatre Manager. Quod licet Jovi, non licet bovi!—[*To the* KING, *who has left the rock.*] I will engage you as ballet master and character actor and offer you a hundred soldi a month.

Another Theatre Manager. [*Speaking in a falsetto voice.*] Hundred soldi, hi, hi, hi? A hundred soldi will the skinflint give you? —I wave a hundred and fifty in your face, you rascal! What do you say, hi, hi, hi? —Will you now or won't you?

The King. [*To the* FIRST THEATRE MANAGER.] Don't you think, honored master, that I am rather a tragedian than a comedian?

The First Theatre Manager. You haven't the least trace of talent as a tragedian; as character actor, on the contrary, there is no chance of it going ill with you again in this world. Believe me, my dear friend, I know these kings. I have eaten dinner with two of them at once! Your king's monologue is the caricature of a real king and will be valued as such.

The Second Theatre Manager. Don't let yourself be hoodwinked by this horse dealer, you rascal! What does he know about comedy! I have studied my profession at the universities of Rome and Bologna. How about two hundred soldi, hi, hi, hi?

The First Theatre Manager. [*Clapping the* KING *on the shoulder.*] I'll give you three hundred soldi, my dear young friend!

The Second Theatre Manager. I'll give you four hundred soldi, you dirty rogue, hi, hi, hi!

The First Theatre Manager. [*Giving the* KING *his purse.*] Here is my purse! Put it in your pocket and keep it as a souvenir of me!

The King. [*Pocketing the purse.*] Will you engage my boy, too?

The First Theatre Manager. Your boy? What has he learned?

Alma. I play Punchinello, honored master.

The First Theatre Manager. Let me see him at once, your Punchinello.

Alma. [*Mounts the rock and speaks in fresh, lively tones.*]

Fortune's pranks are so astounding
That her whims none can foresee;
Sure, I find them so confounding
Smiles nor tears come not to me.

Heaven itself is scarcely steady,
O'er our heads it's turning yet,
Mankind then had best be ready
For a daily somerset.

Mischief, when his legs can trip it,
When his arms are pliant still,
Is so lovable a snippet
That he's sure of your good will!

The Spectators. [*Show their approval.*]

The First Theatre Manager. I'll engage this puppy as the youngest Punchinello in the business.—We will wander to-night *per pedes Apostulorum to Siena,* where my company presents tragedy, farce and tragic-comedy. From thence to Modena, to Perugia——

The King. Before we reach Perugia, I

shall have to break my contract. I am banished that city under pain of death.

The First Theatre Manager. Under what name did that happen to you, my young friend?

The King. I am called Ludovicus.

The First Theatre Manager. I name you Epaminondas Alexandrion! That was the name of a wonderfully talented comedian who eloped with my wife a short time ago. *Nomen est omen!*—Come, my children. [*Leaves with the* KING *and* ALMA.]

Chorus. Soon the sun will rise in state,
Us to scatter for a year; here and there upon the wind,
Driven by relentless Fate,
To hunt illusive phantoms none of us can ever find.

ACT FOUR

Market Place at Perugia

[*In the midst of the market place is a simple stage, from which a flight of steps leads to the spectators' seats. A rope separates the auditorium from the rest of the market place. The back of the stage is curtained off. To the left, a small stairway leads from the stage to a space which serves as a dressing room. The* KING *is kneeling in this space, before a little mirror, making up his face to resemble a majestic kingly mask. He is smooth shaven, is in his shirt sleeves and is clad simply, but richly.* PRINCESS ALMA *sits near him, on an upturned box, with her left foot over her right knee, tuning her lute. She wears a tasteful punchinello's dress, all of white, composed of tights, a close-fitting jacket, trimmed with fur, and a high-pointed hat.*]

The King. Have you chanced to hear, my child, how the advance sale is today?

Alma. How can you have any doubts about that? The announcement that you were to appear sold all the seats for today's performance by sundown yesterday. Indeed, all Perugia knows already that your art far exceeds anything they saw in Epaminondas Alexandrion hitherto.

The King. At the bottom of my soul, I was never pained before that my laurels increased the fame of another. The assumed name protected me from too mortifying a contact with humanity. Even in my most daring dreams I cannot imagine how I would look today upon a throne. Perhaps, after all, I am fit for something higher in this world than dishing out, day by day, the recollections of vanished pomp to the childish rabble as the copy of real majesty.

Alma. In how happy a mood you have been wherever we have played! It even seems to me as if you found our stormy success some slight reward for all the long years of sorrow.

The King. Don't listen to me any longer, my child, or you will lose your joyousness and appear before the public not as a punchinello, but as a spectre from the grave!

Alma. Of course, here in the market place of Perugia you must feel uncomfortable.

A Page. [*Enters the dressing room carrying an autograph album under his arm.*] My mistress, the noble spouse of the honorable Doctor Silvio Andrevitti, Attorney General to His Majesty the King, sends me hither. My mistress desires the celebrated artist Epaminondas Alexandrion to place his autograph in this book. My mistress bids me say that the book contains only the autographs of the greatest men. [*He hands the book and writing materials to the* KING.]

The King. [*Takes the goose quill and writes, speaking the words aloud as he does so.*] "Only simplicity can fathom wisdom," Epaminondas Alexandrion the Second. [*Giving back the album.*] Present my respects to your noble mistress, the spouse of the Attorney General to the King.

[*Exit the page.*]

The King. [*Making himself ready.*] Another wrinkle here, so!—You, my treasure, indeed, appear to have found happiness in our present calling.

Alma. Yes, father! A thousand times, yes! My heart is full of the joy of living, since I see my acting received daily with crowded benches!

The King. It astonishes me how little our environment affects you, although you allow all to believe that they are your equals by birth. You are a lamb among a pack of wolves, each of which has sworn to protect you, because each one grudges you to the others. But wolves remain wolves! And if the lamb does not want to be torn

to pieces finally, it must, sooner or later, become a wolf itself.—But don't listen to me! I do not understand what evil spirit influences me today to call down misfortune upon our heads!

Alma. Do not believe me capable of such base ingratitude, Father, as to think that the pleasure I find in my work as a punchinello prevents me recollecting with joy the noble pomp in which I passed my childhood!

The King. [*Rising with forced composure.*] At any rate, I am ready for the very worst!

[*As he speaks these words the theatre servants place two golden seats in front of the first row of benches. Immediately after, the* THEATRE MANAGER *rushes into the dressing room in the greatest excitement.*]

The Theatre Manager. Alexandrion! Brother! Let me clasp you in my arms! [*He embraces and kisses him.*] You pearl of dramatic art! Shall I make you speechless with pride?—His Majesty the King is coming to the performance! His Majesty the King of Umbria and His Royal Highness the Crown Prince Filipo! Have you words?! I have had two golden chairs put in front of the first row. The moment their Highnesses seat themselves Punchinello must appear on the stage with a deep bow! So be ready, children!—And you, Alexandrion, apple of my eye, bring to light today all the richest treasures hidden in the depths of your soul! As I [*gesture*] turn this glove inside out, so do you turn your inside outside! Let our royal auditors hear things such as have not been heard in any theatre since the time of Plautus and of Terence.

The King. [*Putting on his jacket.*] I was just asking myself whether it might not be better for me to present my royal visitors with something different from my king's farce; perhaps the morning dreams of the old tailor's apprentice, or those of the swineherd. The old tailor's apprentice would give our guest plenty of material for laughter and that is all they expect, while the king's farce might hurt their feelings.

The Theatre Manager. Ha, ha! You are afraid of being locked up again for *lese majeste!* Nonsense! Give your king's farce! Make it stronger than you have ever played it! If royalty honors us, it is because it wants to see the king's farce! What harm can they do us? *Ultra posse nemo tenetur!* —Well, what did I prophesy to you when I picked you from the scum of the land there at the beggars' fair! Today we perform before crowned heads! *Per aspera ad astra!* —— [*Exit.*]

[*During this scene the spectators' seats have become filled with an aristocratic public; outside the ropes the crowd gathers thickly. During the following words the* KING *dons a royal black beard, puts on his wig, sets the golden crown on his head and throws a heavy purple mantle across his shoulders.*]

The King. My head was to fall beneath the headsman's axe in this market place if ever I dared return to Perugia without foreswearing my right to the crown.—Instead of that, how much have I had to foreswear to tread my native soil for the second time! The delight of satisfied revenge; the manly duty of preserving my inheritance for my family; all the good things of earth which fortune lavished on me in my cradle, and now even the naked dignity of human nature which forbids even the slave from offering himself as an entertainment to those condemned along with him!

Alma. And a thousand voices praise you as an artist the like of which never spoke to his folk before. How many king's names are forgotten!

The King. I do not value that! Only a day laborer or a place hunter can wear with pride the laurels which spring from earthly misery! But do you know what pride is possible to me in this existence? Called to an inscrutable trial, I struggle here as only one of a million beings. But King Nicola, as king, met death! No one doubts but that he is long beyond the reach of human humiliation. No one asks him now to renounce the dignity conferred on him by God. No shadow disturbs his kingly remembrance! I owe it to this illusion that I am still alive under God's sun. And until the hour of my death no storm shall deprive me of this possession, which, perhaps, I can still dispose of to your advantage!—My sceptre! My orb! [*He takes both from the property chest.*] And now—the—ki-ki-

king's farce! [*Seized by a sudden pain in the heart, he strives painfully for breath.*]

Alma. [*Rushing to his side.*] Jesu, Maria, my father; I can see how marble white you are through your make-up!

The King. A shortness of breath!—It is over.—I have been subject to it since I was in prison——

[KING PIETRO *and* PRINCE FILIPO *enter the auditorium and take their places in the golden chairs.*]

The Theatre Manager. [*Calling behind the scenes.*] On the stage, Punchinello!

The King. [*Springing up.*] Go! Go! I feel entirely well!

Alma. [*Seizing a fool's bauble, rushes on the stage, bows, and then declaims in a light, jesting tone.*]

I here appear to herald unto you
The coming of a king, who, verily,
Was never king——
Groom of the bedchamber is my post to him.
I laud him as a demigod, a hero;
Give admiration to his wit; praise his clothes;
My profit great in offices and gifts.
I earnestly desire him length of days;
But, should he die and his successor rule——
I trust God's grace will spare me from that blow!——
Why then, obsequiously, with raptured mien
To the newcomer I shall play my rôle,
As is a valet courtier's pious way.
But I must cease, for lo, the King is here!

The King. [*Enters.*] My slumbers have been light throughout the night.

Alma. [*Bowing, with crossed arms.*] Your people should be made to smart for that!

The King. My people? Made to suffer? When my mind
Fears I alone should carry all the blame?
What more have I achieved than other men
That I am called to rule it o'er my kind!
Away from off the steps unto my throne!
Slumber forsook my weary eyes last night
Because I, driven by the power of law,
Signed a death warrant when the hour was late!
Avaunt, you worm! And never venture more
Your head within the limits of my wrath!

Alma. [*Turning to the audience.*]

You see, respected auditors, how hard
It may be candidly to make one's way!
In lack of fitting words for my defence,
My plight with resignation I accept.
Dejected is my exit through this door,
But by another I shall soon return.

[*She comes down the stairway toward the audience backward, then sits down on the steps facing the public.*]

The King. [*To himself.*] Half my lifetime I have striven now
To make my eyes more sharp, to clear my wits,
That my dear folk might reap the benefit!

Alma. [*Speaking to the public.*] Instead of that he might do something wise.
Who gives him thanks? His people whisper low,
His mind is lacking quite in brilliancy,
And his sublime example serves as jest!

The King. [*With uplifted hands.*]
Illuminate me with thy light, O God,
That I depart not from thy chosen way,
That good and evil I may quickly learn!
If thy reflected splendor shine from me
The people cannot blindly mock my rule;
Nor inefficiency mislead my steps!

Alma. [*Springing up.*]
I can, however! [*She steps upon the stage.*]
As you see me now,
I am a woman, decked with all the charms
To fan your kingly thoughts into a blaze!
The flower of innocence remains unplucked
To gratify you with its purity.
Groaning beneath the weight of majesty,
With sublime chastity your wedded bride,
You yet may enter Pleasure's magic path.
Be ruler! Learn to blush as other men,
And do not join the devil's league with death,
In profanation of creation's work.
'Tis fit the hero and the anchorite
Should pray with deep humility to God
To sanctify and make them holy beings.
Before the Lord shall call you to himself
May not some earthly bliss be yours by right?
Do you not fear to come from Egypt Land
Without a good view of the pyramids?

The King. And should I riot in luxurious ease,
Who would protect my folk? Who hear their cry?

Alma. That task I willingly would undertake.

Since childhood it has been my constant use
To ride a horse unbroken to the bit,
To crush his wildness in a frenzied gait.
Thy folk shall grow to know no higher law
Than to administer thy joy and gain.

The King. Depart from out my house, you brazen trull,
Before I stamp a mark upon your brow
With glowing iron!

Alma. Once more the lightning!
My looks do not find favor in his sight!
[*Going up to the last step.*]
My honored hearers, can you tell me now
Where lies the weakness of this curious king?
Else, from his wrathful gestures, much I fear
Our farce is apt to change to tragedy!

King Pietro. [*To* ALMA.] You must approach him as minister, or chancellor, and inform him that it is just his wisdom which brings misery upon the land. If he listens to your words, he is nothing but a fool; if he does not listen, you can boldly call him a tyrant!

Alma. [*Bowing.*]
I'll do as you suggest. With all my heart
I thank you for your counsel, gracious lord!
[*She mounts the stage once more; to the* KING.)
With deep dismay, I see Your Majesty's
August rule in danger. From every side
The mob comes streaming to the palace walls.
To me, your loyal chancellor, 'tis clear,
Instead of shooting down this threatening herd,
No better means can now be found to quell
Their spirit than to send them forth to fight
Against the neighboring principalities.
The mob grows weary of the golden hours
And frets against the long continued peace;
It thirsts for blood, like the wild beast it is.
Its drunken lust will crown you conqueror
Amid the corpses fallen from its ranks!
Heaven itself bestows this last respite.
Seize, then, the sword! Else, even in this hour,
Yourself may fall with many deadly wounds.

King Pietro. Excellently spoken! [*Turning to the* CROWN PRINCE.] Do you remember, my son, to what frightful expedients Bernardo Ruccellai wanted to force me when I forbade the citizens to extend the carnival a week? The pretty boy spoke as if he had been there.

[*After these words the audience gives vent to short, but energetic, applause.*]

Prince Filipo. The actors are exceptionally good. Let us hear them further, my honored father.

King Pietro. I am most keen to learn what rejoinder my able spokesman will meet up there.

The King. My life!—Take that!—The people's uproar frights
Me not! Before they suffer by my fault,
Why let them in their madness slaughter me!
In time to come, ensanguined with my blood,
They will become a dread unto themselves,
And, worshipful, return to Reason's shrine.
My death will serve its purpose thousand fold!
As payment for your spiteful plan of war,
I here dismiss you as my chancellor.
Be happy you have 'scaped the headsman's axe!

King Pietro. Kingly words that I should like to have spoken myself! If only one could find a better chancellor so easily! [*To* ALMA.] I am sorry, my young diplomat, that my advice served you so ill.

[*Another outburst of applause from the spectators.*]

Alma. [*Turning to the public.*] Once more my well-laid plan has gone astray!—
Before, dear sirs, I yet proceed to show
How I can bring this hero to his knees,
So that he cries beneath my scornful lash,
And whining drags himself unto my feet,
A sorry object, broken to his soul,
Begging that I shall lift him up again
And dampening all the dust about with tears,——
Before I show my skill in this respect,
I ask you to unlace your purses' strings
And to bestow a little of your wealth
With open hands upon my humble self.

[*She takes two white plates and comes down the steps.*]
Merely a pause, respected auditors,
A little contribution's all I ask!

[*She passes among the rows of spectators, collecting from them, but does not approach the royal entourage. The* KING *wanders*

about the stage speaking a monologue.]

The King. Conflict on conflict! Should my strength be spent,
Death, like a living flame, would rush unchecked
Throughout the confines of the realm!
[*To the public.*]
An obolus will serve, most honored sirs!

Alma. [*To a spectator who puts his arm about her waist and attempts to kiss her.*]
Oh, fie, good sir, you scarcely are polite!
Besides, I'm not a girl; pray keep your place!

The Spectator. I never yet saw boyish hand so slim!

The King. [*To the public.*]
An obolus is quite enough, good sirs!
[*To himself.*] Would it were over!—Beyond betterment;
I yet await what store of future ills
Malicious fortune still may deal to me!
[*To the public.*]
Only an obolus, good sirs, I ask!

[King Pietro *beckons* Alma *to him and lays a gold piece upon her plate.*]

The King. [*Bowing his thanks to the audience.*]
What is more happy than the artist's soul!
Misfortune is a spring of joy to him;
He shapes a pleasure from a wild lament.
Adversity indeed, may clip his wings,
But at the sound of gold he soon recalls
His inborn kinship to humanity.

[Alma *returns to the stage and empties the plates into the* King's *hand. He estimates the sum quickly, thrusts the money into his purple mantle, then, turning to his daughter, continues.*]

The King. Once more, deceptive shape, you dare to tread
Before my eyes. Who are you?—Let me know!

Alma. I am yourself!

The King. Myself! But I am that!

Alma. Which of us two is right will soon appear!
Before you, mangled by a beast of prey,
There lies a corpse. The blame belongs to you!

The King. I murdered him! How know you of such things?

Alma. And do you see the stakes all round about?

The King. That, too, is known to you?

Alma. 'Tis living flesh,
Encased in tow and tar!

The King. His cry of pain
Was music to my ear! It cost me much!

Alma. The living entrails on the altar red,
Even today are used by you to move
The innocent to choice of peace or war!

The King. How came you by such store of frightful facts?
In deep repentance now I tear my hair!
My royal might seductive proved!

Alma. A jest!
You're clasping at your quickly beating heart,
The while your eyes still shadow forth their greed!

The King. 'Tis not a jest!

Alma. It is!

The King. Nevertheless,
Spare me worse!

Alma. Childish bodies, glowing pure,
Are made a sacrifice unto your lust,
That you may see their tender limbs contort.

The King. No! Nevermore!

Alma. You see, you must give way.
That shows that you are weak and I am strong!

The King. [*Sinking to his knees.*]
Have mercy!

Alma. Have you ever yet
Obtained victory in strife with me?

The King. [*Weeping.*] Behold my head is bent unto the earth
By pains of hell!

Alma. Then pluck up heart again,
Torture of innocents will calm your own!

The King. [*With trembling voice.*]
You beast, you are the stronger of us twain,
But grant a brief respite before I heap
New cruelties upon forgotten ones.
I crawl like any worm upon the dust.
My better self, which I have lost to you,
Begs that you do not press your might too far.
New victims soon will fall within my clutch;
The tongue which has already tasted blood
Beseeches you to save them from its rage.

King Pietro. [*Rising from his chair.*]

You carry your jests somewhat too far up there! What will the foolish multitudes think when it sees royal majesty so brought to dust!

Alma. [*To the public.*]

Folly can show the naked truth beneath
The glittering facts on history's page.
[*To the* KING.]
I'll spare you, then.—But first take solemn oath
To cherish good always within your heart!

The King. I swear!
[*Looking up in tears.*]
You ask me that!—I'm in a maze!
Who are you?

Alma. I am your dream! Your dæmon!
Awake to higher efforts from my ban,
I call on you to rise above yourself!

The King. [*Rises and runs anxiously up and down.*]

And if Methuselah I should outlive
That frightful error I shall ne'er forget!
Under the cover of the shamed night
The torch flares out: Blazing in wild array,
Consuming flames run through the heated limbs;
Vice sings its victory; lecherous hell
Is jubilant; the rising flood of crime
O'erflows its banks; and deeds the gray-haired wastrel,
Tortured by flames of lust, could not achieve,
Stagger in kinship to the drunken thought!
—— Oh, take my praise, thou golden light of day!

Alma. [*To the public.*] With this I make an ending to our play.
Your pardon, if its setting troubled you.
My sole desire was merely to exploit
That ancient, well-liked acrobatic trick
[*gesture*]
By which a man climbs up on his own head.

King Pietro. [*To the* KING.] And you call that a farce, my dear friend?! See, you have brought the tears to my eyes!

The King. [*After he has laid aside the crown.*] Will your Majesty believe it, our piece has been received everywhere as a harmless farce?

King Pietro. I cannot believe that! Are my subjects so stupid? Otherwise, how can you explain it to me?

The King. I cannot inform your Majesty as to that. Such is life!

King Pietro. Very well, then, if such is life, my people shall not hear you again, until they understand you, for otherwise your play would only undermine the power of my throne. Lay aside your mantle and stand forth before me!

[*The* KING *lays aside mantle, beard and wig and descends the steps.*]

King Pietro. I cannot appoint a man who has made his living collecting pennies to any office of state. But my royalty shall never prevent me from making a companion of the man whose gifts have moved me to tears. There is a post vacant close to the throne, which I have left unfilled until now, because I did not wish to make a place for folly in a position where even the greatest amount of wisdom is too small. But you shall fill this position. You shall be powerless against the meanest citizen of my state. But your high mental power shall stand between me and my people, between me and the royal chancellors; it shall be allowed to expend itself unpunished upon me and my son. As there on the stage, your soul stood between the ruler and his dark desires, so shall it check my innermost self! I appoint you my court fool!—Follow me! [*He starts to go.*]

The Theatre Manager. [*Wringing his hands and with tears in his eyes, throws himself on his knees before* KING PIETRO.] *Morituri te salutat!* Your gracious Majesty's unworthy theatre manager, who single-handed plucked this exceptional tragedian from the gallows, now has his life blighted by your Majesty's gracious choice!

King Pietro. We bestow upon you the privilege of giving performances untaxed for twenty years!

The King. May I inform your Majesty that I am the father of this young girl and that the father will appreciate your goodness even more than the actor if he may hope that his child will no longer need to conceal her true nature.

King Pietro. Was I so deceived! [*To* ALMA.] I do not want to hear your audacious speeches again from a woman's mouth. [*To the* KING.] Let your child follow you! [*He leaves the theatre in company with the* PRINCE.]

ACT FIVE

The Throne Room

[*The* KING *in court costume. His office of court fool is shown discreetly by a suitable head covering. In his languid hand he holds a short bauble. He appears strangely altered: his pale face is deeply lined and his eyes seem twice as large as formerly.*]

The King. How strange is life! During many years of hardship of every description I felt my bodily strength increase daily. Each sunrise found me brighter in spirits, stronger in muscle. No mishap caused me to doubt the sturdiness of my constitution. And since I have been living here in peace and plenty I am shriveling like an apple in springtime. I feel life going from me step by step and the doctors agree in shrugging their shoulders and saying with long faces that they cannot foresee the outcome.—Did I ever reign in these halls? Every day since I came here I have asked myself the same question, and every day it seems more nonsensical. It is as hard for me to believe as it would be for me to credit anyone who told me that I had lived on another planet. King Pietro is the worthiest prince who ever had a throne, and I am the last person in his realm who would want to change places with him. That is my last word each evening, a word which does not make me dream of the thick prison air, but of the dripping, stormbent, rustling trees, of the gloomy heaths, of the virgin dew on the thick grass, of my journeys from place to place on the stroller's vans, on the tailboards of which I made all hearts waver between pity and respect.—I have noticed an unusual cramp in my left arm for the last few days. It is not gout, it is not the weakness of old age. But before my failing members give way, I have a work to accomplish. Let me complete it, O Fate, so that we may part in friendship! I have cultivated it with all possible care, as the only thing profitable in my life. Or shall I be the dupe again? Perhaps, the eager young hearts really do not need my help? Does egotism make me overestimate by importance in furthering their union? Who will open my eyes to my true merits? Blind I came, must I go so?—I go and—listen! Later I shall not have to think about the answers.

[*Exit.*]

[*Enter* KING PIETRO *and* CROWN PRINCE FILIPO.]

King Pietro. I have made inquiries among the Medici in Florence if they are willing that a daughter of their house should become your wife. I have just received word that the Medici, confident in the permanency of our rule, would welcome such an alliance.

Filipo. Before you did that, my respected father, I had distinctly told you that I shall never marry any one but Donna Alma, Alexandrion's daughter!

King Pietro. [*In anger.*] The daughter of my court fool! You belong back in the shop whence you came!

Filipo. Then send me back to the shop, respected father!

King Pietro. Although there can be no doubt of this maiden's virtues, the general welfare of the state demands that you wed a prince's daughter. If you desired to court the daughter of a citizen of Perugia, I might be able to countenance your mésalliance without slapping our own origin in the face. Even then, your choice would be an offense against the state, which would result in party strife and violence among the citizens. But if you chose a queen of obscurist origin for your people, then you show at once that you undervalue the duties of a prince. Who can tell what heirs may spring from such a marriage! Instead of looking forward to your reign with confidence, they will await it with sullen dread, anxiety and insubordination. Did I overcome King Nicola and drive him to an early death that my son should indulge in madness such as cost that monarch his life and throne?! That is the reason I brought Alexandrion here, because he has meditated upon just such serious questions! [*Lifting a portiere.*] Call the fool!—Now he shall show me if his wisdom can withstand the call of blood! Now he shall show me if he can follow his own sermons as I do, or if he is only an empty chatterer!

The King. [*Entering.*] What does my dear lord desire?

King Pietro. I have been beholden to you for advice in the hours of the most frightful danger. Had I not followed freely your

advice, so full of watchful and crafty shrewdness, in difficult situations we might today be under foreign rule. Now, however, I require of you a sacrifice which, as the father of your child, you owe the state and our dynasty. Without restraint I allowed your intelligence to rule between me and my own blood, never suspecting how soon I should have to ask you to put it between yourself and your child. The Prince asks me to give him your daughter for his wife!

The King. My child is so far above me that her feet never touch the ground without the seed of happiness blossoming beneath her tread.

King Pietro. I can believe that, but will you order your daughter to reject every offer of the Prince!

Filipo. Donna Alma will never obey that order!

King Pietro. Silence!

The King. I can order nothing in this country.

King Pietro. That is true! But you must obey!

The King. That is true! But my daughter need not obey!

King Pietro. Enough of your jests! I am sorry I overprized your wisdom. You understand that your refusal ends your stay here at my court. I am pained to see your calm deliberation forsake you at this pass. You are a bad father, Alexandrion, in not fearing to deprive your child of my good will! In order to protect myself against the reproach of ingratitude, I shall have your salary continued——

The King. Thank you, brother, I need your bounty no longer.

King Pietro. Are you out of your senses?!

The King. I see more clearly than you. You no more than I can prevent the wonderful fulfilment of mighty fate.

King Pietro. Stop your idle babble! I ask you for the last time, will you obey my order? If not, fear my wrath!

The King. It is beyond your power as well as mine!

King Pietro. Very well. My son if he wants may run after you. I banish you and your child for life from this day forth from the land of Umbria, under pain of death in case you return to it!

The King. [*Breaks forth in merry laughter.*]

Filipo. Holy Virgin, what's the matter with him!

King Pietro. [*Disconcerted.*] It is the laughter of a madman.

The King. [*Laughing.*] Surely, dear friends, you will permit me to laugh since I have been paid for being foolish.

King Pietro. Give us some explanation of what is passing within you, Alexandrion!

The King. [*Raising himself to his full height.*] Do you know that you banished me once before, in this very room, from Umbria under pain of death?!

King Pietro. It is impossible for me to remember all the judgments I have passed!

The King. You passed your first judgment against King Nicola, and I am he!

King Pietro. [*Shaken.*] It was long to be foreseen that he would come to such an end! [*To the* King.] Do you want to act a tragic scene for us out of your former occupation?

The King. I, here before you, am King Nicola!

King Pietro. [*With apparent anger.*] I have nothing to do with imposters. Do you really expect to gain your ends by such thieves' tricks?

The King. I am King Nicola! I am King Nicola!

King Pietro. [*To* Filipo.] He has had a stroke! God have mercy on his soul!

Filipo. His poor child! Merciful Heaven, when she hears of it!

The King. [*In the greatest astonishment.*] Why are you not overcome with astonishment?—You do not believe me?—Are you going to ask me to prove what since my downfall I have kept secret only by supernatural strength of soul?

Filipo. We believe you, Alexandrion! Let me conduct you to your room. We believe you!

King Pietro. If only your poor heart would grow quiet!

The King. [*Anxiously.*] No, no, I shall not grow quiet! You do not trust my words! You doubt my reason!—Almighty God, where shall I get witnesses to confirm the truth!—Let my daughter be called! —It is high time; I shall not see the light much longer!—Let my daughter be called!

—I am too weak to fetch her myself.—Let my child be called!—My child!

Filipo. I beseech you, Father, do not gratify his wish! The girl will go crazy from anguish if unprepared she sees him in his mind's darkness!

The King. Let my child be called! I have nothing to leave her but her princely ancestry, and now she is about to be cheated of this last possession through my stupendous folly! Who will believe the girl when my eyes are closed! Indeed, there is nothing in me to recall a king! And my pictures, my statues are destroyed! And even if a picture were found, who would accept a resemblance as proof of my monstrous statement! A resemblance in which time has destroyed every trace! Help me, Heavenly Father, in this anguish worse than death!

King Pietro. Have you quite forgotten, my dear Alexandrion, that King Nicola is dead?

The King. Dead?—How kindly you speak because you think I am mad! Dead?—Where is he buried? I fought against the flood and escaped to land beyond the city walls. But who will believe me! Call my child here! She will advise me, as she has done a hundred thousand times before, with her wisdom.

Filipo. I'll hurry and call your own physician, my respected father!

The King. Call my child! My child!

Princess Alma. [*Rushing in.*] My father! Almighty God! I heard your agonizing voice throughout the house!

The King. Am I King Nicola, or am I not?

Alma. You are King Nicola, my father. Do not worry! What more can they do to us today?

The King. So you too have gone mad or you are a miserable pretender! They don't believe us! What can we do to prove it to them, so that I may lay my head on the block and thereby give you attestation of your birth?! Send to the prison! There they have the record of the scars on my body. I blasphemed against the king. "Curse the king!" I cried. I was that king!—But where is a man with a normal reason who will believe such adventures! I never thought of that during all these years! Who would carry documents with him when his head had been twice forfeited to the executioner! And have I fathomed the ways of Almighty God more than anyone only to be considered mad in the end! But such is life! Such is life!

King Pietro. The sight of your sufferings is heartrending, Alexandrion! But your assertion is ridiculous!

Alma. He is King Nicola!

Filipo. Think what you say, Donna Alma!

Alma. He is King Nicola!

The King. Search your brain, my dear, clever child, and see if you cannot find a means of making the truth shine before their eyes like a ray of sunshine!

Alma. I will bring a host of witnesses, father, as soon as the penalty is taken off your head.

Filipo. Was not the name of King Nicola's daughter Alma?

King Pietro. Thousands of children are baptized with princely names!

The King. Do you hear, my child? An infallible proof! Otherwise, I shall yet end my unhappy war with the world in a madhouse and burden your life with the most gruesome of curses, the curse of the ridiculous!

Alma. Lead us to the Ursulines!

Filipo. Can it be possible! The king in his victor's service!—Speak, my father!—Pardon him!

King Pietro. Be you who you may, I lift every penalty which may hang over you.

The King. And now the proofs, my child! Quick, the proofs! Even if their testimony is as clear as day, it will do as little after my death to help the recognition of your birth as my vain words do now!

Alma. The Mother Superior of the Ursulines will testify—— [*Frightened.*] My father! Jesu, Maria, your look! What are you seeking so helplessly? For God's sake, speak!

Filipo. [*Who has hurried to aid the* KING.] Go, Donna Alma! The strength begins to leave his limbs.

The King. [*Struggling against death, while* FILIPO *and* ALMA *support him upon the steps of the throne.*] I seek proofs!—Proofs! Who can prove by his corpse that he is a king!—It is the last chance!—I am not mad!—Hurry, my child!—Proofs—Too late! too late!—Such is life!

Alma. [*Bending over him, lamenting.*] My father! Don't you hear me? Look me in the eye, my father! What is your hand seeking? Your child is kneeling beside you!

The King.—I thank you, bu—but not as a king—only—as—a man ——

Alma. Oh, oh, his eyes!—Father! Move your hand! Oh, woe is me, is there no help? Oh, pity me, he no longer hears my voice! His cheeks are cold! How can I warm his heart? Your mighty soul, my father, where is it, that it save you! Don't leave me alone, my father! Don't leave me alone! Oh, woe is me, woe is me, he has left me!

King Pietro. [*To himself.*] I stand here like an outlaw!

Filipo. Quiet your sorrow, Donna Alma!

King Pietro. I will seek to make amends for her loss to the best of my power, if she is willing to become my child through you.

Filipo. God bless you for that, my father!

King Pietro. We will give him princely burial; whoever he may be! But nobody must hear a word of what we three have passed through here during this hour. History shall never tell of me that I made a king my court fool!

THE END

APPENDIX I

PLAYS BY THE AUTHORS REPRESENTED IN THIS VOLUME

Titles are given in the original language, except in the case of plays written in Russian, Czech, and Hungarian. If the play has been translated into English, the title of the translation is given in parentheses. The date assigned to a play is that of publication.

LEONID ANDREYEV

To the Stars, 1905 (To the Stars). *Savva,* 1906 (Savva). *The Life of Man,* 1906 (The Life of Man). *Tsar Hunger,* 1907 (King Hunger). *Days of our Life,* 1908. *Love for your Neighbor,* 1908 (Love of One's Neighbor; The Dear Departing). *The Bat,* 1908. *Anathema,* 1909 (Anathema). *Anfisa,* 1909. *Gaudeamus,* 1910. *The Ocean,* 1911. *The Pretty Sabine Women,* 1912 (The Pretty Sabine Women). *Professor Storitsyn,* 1912. *Honor,* 1912. *Katherina Ivanovna,* 1912 (Katerina). *Thou Shalt not Kill,* 1913. *Thought,* 1914. *An Event,* 1914 (An Incident). *The Parrot,* 1914. *King, Law, Liberty,* 1914 (The Sorrows of Belgium). *Youth,* 1914. *He, the One Who Gets Slapped,* 1915 (He Who Gets Slapped). *War's Burden,* 1915. *Dear Phantoms,* 1916. *Requiem,* 1917. *The Waltz of the Dogs,* 1922 (The Waltz of the Dogs). *Samson Enchained,* 1922 (Samson in Chains).

JACINTO BENAVENTE

Benavente has written over one hundred dramatic works of various kinds, including 52 long plays, 26 one-act plays, monologues, dramatic sketches, and translations from the Catalan, French, and English. Seventeen of his original long plays and one-act plays have been translated into English as follows: *La Gobernadora,* 1904 (The Governor's Wife). *La Noche del Sábado,* 1904 (Saturday Night). *La Princesa Bebé,* 1905 (Princess Bebé). *Rosas de Otoño,* 1905 (Autumnal Roses). *Los Malhechores de Bien,* 1905 (The Evil Doers of Good). *Los Intereses Creados,* 1908 (The Bonds of Interest). *La Sonrisa de Gioconda,* 1908 (The Smile of Mona Lisa). *El Marido de su Viuda,* 1909 (His Widow's Husband). *Elecanto de una Hora,* 1909 (The Magic of an Hour). *Por las Nubes,* 1909 (In the Clouds). *La Escuela de las Princesas,* 1910 (The School of Princesses). *El Príncipe que Todo lo Aprendío en los Libros,* 1910 (The Prince who Learned Everything out of Books). *La Malquerida,* 1914 (La Malquerida). *La Verdad,* 1915 (The Truth). *Campo de Armiño,* 1916 (The Field of Ermine). *No Fumadores,* 1919 (No Smoking). *Una Señora,* 1920 (A Lady).

BJÖRNSTJERNE BJÖRNSON

Mellem Slagene, 1856. *Halte Hulda,* 1858. *Konig Sverre,* 1861. *Sigurd Slembe,* 1862 (Sigurd Slembe). *Maria Stuart i Skotland,* 1864 (Mary Queen of Scots). *De Nygifte,* 1865 (The Newly-Married Couple; A Lesson in Marriage). *Sigurd Josalfar,* 1872. *Redaktören,* 1874 (The Editor). *En Fallit,* 1875 (The Bankrupt). *Kongen,* 1877 (The King). *Leonarda,* 1879 (Leonarda). *Det Ny System,* 1879 (The New System). *En Hanske,* 1883 (The Gauntlet; The Glove). *Over Aevne,* I, 1883 (Beyond Our Power; Beyond Human Power, Pastor Sang). *Geografi og Kaerlighed,* 1885 (Love and Geography).

Over Aevne, II, 1895 (Beyond Our Power, II). *Paul Lange og Tora Parsberg,* 1898 (Paul Lange and Tora Parsberg). *Laboremus,* 1891 (Laboremus). *Pa Storhove,* 1902. *Daglannet,* 1904. *Nar Den Ny Vin Blosstrer,* 1909 (When the New Wine Blooms).

ROBERTO BRACCO

Non Fare ad Aktri, 1886. *Lui, Lei, Lui,* 1887. *Un' Avventura di Viaggio,* 1887. *Le Disilluse,* 1888. *Dopo il Veglione e Viceversa,* 1893. *Una Donna,* 1894. *L' Infedele,* 1894 (not published in English but translated and played as The Countess Coquette). *Maschere,* 1894. *Il Trionfo,* 1895. *Don Pietro Caruso,* 1895. *La Fine dell' Amore,* 1896 (played in English as I Love You). *Fiori d'Arancio,* 1898 (played in English as Orange Blossoms). *Tragedie dell' Anima,* 1899. *Il Diretto di Vivere,* 1900. *Uno degli Onesti,* 1900 (played in English as The Honorable Lover). *Sperduti nel Buio,* 1901. *Maternita,* 1903. *Il Frutto Acerbo,* 1904. *Fotografia senza . . . ,* 1904.. *La Piccolo Fonte,* 1905 (The Hidden Spring). *Notte di Neve,* 1905 (Night of Snow; A Snowy Night). *I Fantasmi,* 1906 (Phantasms). *Nellina,* 1908. *Il Piccolo Sante,* 1909. *Il Perfetto Amore,* 1910. *Nemmeno un Bacio,* 1912. *L' Amante Lontano,* 1913. *Ad Armi Corte,* 1913. *La Chiacchierina,* 1913. *L'Internazionale,* 1915. *L' Uocchie Cunzacrate,* 1916. *La Culla,* 1918.

EUGENE BRIEUX

Bernard Palissy [with G. Salandri], 1879. *Le Bureau des Divorces* [with G. Salandri], 1886. *Sténio,* 1888. *Ménages d'Artistes,* 1890 (Artists' Families). *La Fille de Durame,* 1890. *Corneille à Petit-Couronne,* 1890. *Blanchette,* 1892 (Blanchette). *M. de Réboval,* 1892. *La Couvée,* 1893. *L'Engrenage,* 1894. *La Rose Bleue,* 1895. *Le Soldat Graindor,* 1895. *L'Évasion,* 1896 (The Escape). *Les Bienfaiteurs,* 1896. *Les Trois Filles du M. Dupont,* 1897 (The Three Daughters of M. Dupont). *L'École des Belles-Mères,* 1898 (The School for Mothers-in-Law). *Résultat des Courses,* 1898. *Le Berceau,* 1898. *La Robe Rouge,* 1900 (The Red Robe). *Les Remplaçantes,* 1901. *La Petite Amie,* 1902. *Les Avariés,* 1902 (Damaged Goods). *Maternité,* 1903 (Maternity). *La Déserteuse* [with Jean Sigaux], 1904. *Les Hannetons,* 1906 (not published in English but played as Madame Pierre). *La Française,* 1907. *Simone,* 1908. *Suzette,* 1909. *La Foi,* 1909 (False Gods). *La Femme Seule,* 1912 (Woman on her Own). *Le Bourgeois aux Champs,* 1914. *Les Américains chez Nous,* 1920. *Les Trois Bons Amis,* 1921. *L'Avocat,* 1922. *L'Enfant* [*Pierrette et Galaor*], 1923.

KAREL CAPEK

The Brigand, 1920. *R. U. R.,* 1921 (R. U. R.). *The Makropoulos Case,* 1922 (The Makropoulos Secret). *The Life of the Insects* [written in collaboration with Joseph Capek], 1923 (And So ad Infinitum; played in New York as The World We Live in; or, The Insect Comedy). *Loupeznik,* 1926. *Adam Creator* [written in collaboration with Joseph Capek], 1927. [Note: *The Solstice* and *The Pistol of the Beg,* translated into English under those titles, are not the work of the author of *R.U.R.,* but of Karel Matej Capek (1860-1927).]

PAUL CLAUDEL

Tête d'Or [first version], 1890 (Tête d'Or). *La Ville* [first version], 1893 (The City). *Violaine* [composed, 1892], 1901. *L'Échange* [composed, 1894], 1901. *Tête d'Or* [second version], 1901 (Tête d'Or). *Le Repos du Septième Jour* [composed, 1896], 1901. *La Ville* [second version], 1901 (The City). *Le Partage du Midi* [composed, 1900], 1906. *L'Otage,* 1911 (The *Hostage*). *L'Annonce Faite à Marie,* 1912 (The Tidings Brought to

Mary); *Protée* [a musical comedy], 1914. *La Nuit de Noel de 1914,* 1915. *Le Pain Dur,* 1917. *Le Père Humilié,* 1919. *L'Ours et la Lune* [a puppet play], 1920. *L'Homme et son Desir,* 1921. *Le Femme et son Ombre* [a ballet], 1923.

GABRIELE D'ANNUNZIO

La Parabola delle Vergini Fatue e delle Vergini Prudenti, 1897. *La Parabola del' Uomo Ricco e del Povero Lazaro,* 1898. *Il Sogno d' un Mattino di Primavera,* 1897 (A Dream of a Spring Morning). *La Parabola del Figliuol Prodigo,* 1898. *Il Sogno d' un Tramonto d' Autonno,* 1898 (A Dream of an Autumn Sunset). *La Città Morta,* 1898 (The Dead City). *La Gioconda,* 1899 (Gioconda). *La Gloria,* 1899. *Francesca da Rimini,* 1902 (Francesca da Rimini). *La Figlia di Jorio,* 1904 (The Daughter of Jorio). *La Fiaccola sotto il Moggio,* 1905. *Più che l' Amore,* 1907. *La Nave,* 1908 (The Ship). *Fedra,* 1909. *Le Martyre de Saint Sébastian,* 1911 (a libretto for the music of Claude Debussy; written in French and translated into Italian). *La Pisanelle,* 1913 (a libretto written for the music of Pietro Mascagni). *Le Chèvrefeuille,* 1913 (written in French, and translated into Italian as Il Ferro; translated into English as The Honeysuckle). *Amaranta,* 1914. *La Piave,* 1918 (a libretto written for the music of Italo Montemezzo). *Cabiria,* 1914 (a motion-picture scenario).

BENITO PEREZ GALDOS

Realidad, 1892. *Gerona,* 1893. *Los Condenados,* 1894. *La Loca de la Casa,* 1893. *La de San Quintin,* 1894 (The Duchess of San Quentin). *Doña Perfecta,* 1896. *La Fiera,* 1896. *Electra,* 1901 (Electra). *Alma y Vida,* 1902. *Mariucha,* 1903. *El Abuelo,* 1904 (The Grandfather). *Amor y Ciencia,* 1905. *Bárbara,* 1905. *Voluntad,* 1907. *Pedro Minio,* 1908. *Celea en los Infiernos,* 1913. *Alceste,* 1914. *Sor Simona,* 1915. *El Tacaño Salomon,* 1916. *Santa Juana de Castella,* 1918. *Anton Caballero,* 1922.

MAXIM GORKI

The Middle Class, 1901 (The Smug Citizen). *The Lower Depths,* 1902 (The Lower Depths; In the Depths; A Lodging for the Night; A Night Refuge; A Night Shelter; Submerged). *Children of the Sun,* 1905 (Children of the Sun). *Barbarians,* 1905. *Enemies,* 1906. *The Last Ones,* 1908. *Odd People,* 1910. *Children,* 1910. *The Zykovs,* 1914. *The Old Man,* 1915 (The Judge). *The Counterfeit Coin,* 1926.

GERHART HAUPTMANN

Vor Sonnenaufgang, 1889 (Before Dawn). *Das Friedensfest,* 1890 (The Festival of Peace; The Coming of Peace; The Reconciliation). *Einsame Menschen,* 1891 (Lonely Lives). *College Crampton,* 1892 (Colleague Crampton). *Der Biberpelz,* 1893 (The Beaver Coat). *Die Weber,* 1892 (The Weavers). *Hannele's Himmelfarht,* 1893 (The Assumption of Hannele; Hannele). *Florian Geyer,* 1894. *Helios,* 1896. (Helios). *Die Versunkene Glocke,* 1896 (The Sunken Bell). *Elga,* 1898 (Elga). *Pastoral,* 1898 (Pastoral). *Fuhrman Henschel,* 1898 (Drayman Henschel; Fuhrman Henschel). *Schluck und Jau,* 1899 (Schluck and Jau). *Michael Kramer,* 1900 (Michael Kramer). *Der Rote Hahn,* 1901 (The Conflagration). *Der Arme Heinrich,* 1902 (Heinrich of Auë). *Rose Bernd,* 1903 (Rose Bernd). *Und Pippa Tanzt!,* 1906 (And Pippa Dances!). *Die Jungfern von Bischofsberg,* 1907 (The Maidens of the Mount). *Keiser Karl's Geisel,* 1908 (Charlemagne's Hostage). *Griselda,* 1909 (Griselda). *Die Ratten,* 1911 (The Rats). *Gabriel Schilling's Flucht,* 1912 (Gabriel Schilling's Flight). *Festspiel in deutschen Reimen,* 1913 (Commemoration Masque). *Der Bogen von Odysseus,* 1914 (The Bow of Odysseus). *Winterballade,* 1917 (The Winter Ballad). *Der Weisse Heiland,* 1920 (The White Savior). *Indipohdi,* 1920 (Indipohdi). *Peter Brauer,* 1921 (Peter Brauer). *Veland,* 1925. *Dorothea Angermann,* 1926. *Till Eulenspiegel,* 1927.

GEORG KAISER

Die Sorina, 1917. *Rektor Kleist,* 1918. *Hölle, Weg, Erde,* 1919. *Der Brand im Opernhaus,* 1919 (The Fire in the Opera House). *Juana,* 1919. *Von Morgens bis Mitternacht,* 1920 (From Morn to Midnight). *Konstantin Strobel,* 1920. *Die Koralle,* 1920 (The Coral). *Die Jüdische Witwe,* 1920. *Die Bürger von Calais,* 1920. *Europa,* 1920. *Das Frauenopfer,* 1920. *Gas,* part I, 1920. *Der Gerettete Alkibiades,* 1920 [?]. *David und Goliath,* 1921. *Kanzlist Krehler,* 1922. *Noli Me Tangere,* 1922. *König Hahnrei,* 1923. *Nebeneinander,* 1923. *Die Flucht nach Venedig,* 1923. *Der Geist der Antike,* 1923. *Gilles und Jeanne,* 1923. *Kolportage,* 1924. *Der Protagonist* [one-act opera], 1925. *Gas,* part II, 1925. *Zweimal Oliver,* 1926. *Papier Muehle,* 1927. *Der Praesident,* 1927. *Oktobertag,* (?) (The Phantom Lover).

MAURICE MAETERLINCK

La Princesse Maleine, 1889 (The Princess Maleine). *Les Aveugles,* 1890 (The Blind; The Sightless). *L'Intruse,* 1890 (The Intruder). *Les Sept Princesses,* 1891 (The Seven Princesses). *Pelléas et Mélisande,* 1892 (*Pelleas and Melisande*). *Alladine et Palomides,* 1894 (Alladine and Palomides). *L'Intérieur,* 1894 (Interior; Home). *La Mort de Tintagile,* 1894 (The Death of Tintagiles). *Aglavaine et Sélysette,* 1894 (Aglavaine and Selysette). *Ariane et Barbe Bleu,* 1901 (Ariane and Blue Beard). *Soeur Béatrice,* 1900 (Sister Beatrice). *Monna Vanna,* 1903 (Monna Vanna). *Joyselle,* 1903 (Joyselle). *Le Miracle de Saint Antoine,* 1904 (The Miracle of Saint Anthony). *L'Oiseau Bleu,* 1908 (The Blue Bird). *Marie Magdeleine,* 1913 (Mary Magdalen). *Les Fiançailles,* 1918 (The Betrothed). *Le Bourgmestre de Stilemonde,* 1923 (The Burgermaster of Stilemonde). *The Cloud that Lifted,* 1923, and *The Power of the Dead,* 1923, translated into English under these titles, seemingly have not been printed in French.

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EDMOND ROSTAND

Le Gant Rouge, 1888. *Les deux Pierrots,* 1891 (Weeping Pierrot and Laughing Pierrot). *Les Romanesques,* 1894 (The Romancers; The Romantics; The Fantasticks). *La Princess Lointaine,* 1895 (The Princess Faraway; The Lady of Dreams). *La Samaritaine,* 1897 (The Woman of Samaria). *Cyrano de Bergerac,* 1897 (six translations under same title). *L'Aiglon,* 1900 (L'Aiglon; The Eaglet). *Chantecler,* 1910 (Chantecler). *Le Bois Sacré,* 1910. *La dernière Nuit de Don Juan,* 1921.

ARTHUR SCHNITZLER

Anatol, 1893 (Anatol). *Das Märchen,* 1894. *Paracelsus,* 1899 (Paracelsus). *Liebelei,* 1896 (Light o' Love; Playing with Love). *Freiwild,* 1897 (Free Game). *Das Vermächtnis,* 1898 (The Legacy). *Die Gefährtin,* 1899 (The Mate; His Companion). *Der Grüne Kakadu,* 1899 (The Green Cockatoo; The Duke and the Actress). *Der Schleier der Beatrice,* 1900. *Die Frau mit dem Dolche,* 1902 (The Lady with the Dagger; The Woman

with the Dagger). *Lebendige Stunden,* 1902 (Living Hours). *Die Letzen Masken,* 1902 (The Last Masks). *Literatur,* 1902 (Literature). *Reigen* [Dialogues], 1903 (Hands Around). *Der Einsame Weg,* 1904 (The Lonely Way). *Zwischenspiel,* 1905 (Intermezzo). *Der Puppenspieler,* 1906. *Der Tapfere Cassian,* 1906 (Gallant Cassian). *Zum Grossen Wurstel,* 1906. *Der Ruf des Lebens,* 1906. *Komtesse Mizzi; oder der Familientag,* 1909 (Countess Mizzi). *Der junge Medardus,* 1910. *Das weite Land,* 1911 (The Vast Domain). *Professor Bernhardi,* 1912 (adapted as Professor Bernhardi). *Die Stunde des Erkennens,* 1915 (The Hour of Recognition). *Die grosse Szene,* 1915 (The Big Scene). *Das Bacchusfest,* 1915 (The Festival of Bacchus). *Fink und Fliederbusch,* 1917. *Die Schwestern,* 1918. *Komödie der Verführung,* 1924. *Der Gang zum Weiher,* 1926.

AUGUST STRINDBERG

Fritänkaren, 1870. *I Rom,* 1870. *Hermione,* 1878. *Mäster Olaf,* 1878, 1881. *Den Fredlöse,* 1880. *Gillets Himlighet,* 1880. *Anno Fyrtiåtta,* 1881. *Herr Hengts Hustru,* 1882. *Lycko-Pers Resa,* 1882 (Lucky Per). *Fadren,* 1887 (The Father). *Die Hemsoer,* 1889. *Kamraterna,* 1888 (Comrades). *Froken Julie,* 1888 (Countess Julie; Miss Julia; Julie; Countess Julia). *Creditorer,* 1889 (Creditors). *Fordringsegare,* 1890. *Paria,* 1890 (Pariah; The Outcast). *Samum,* 1890 (Simoom). *Den Starkare,* 1890 (The Stronger; The Stronger Woman). *Himmelrikets Nycklar,* 1892. *Inför Döden,* 1893 (Facing Death). *Första Varningen,* 1893 (The First Warning). *Debet och Credit,* 1893 (Debit and Credit) *Moderskärlek,* 1893 (Mother Love; Motherly Love). *Das Spiel mit dem Feuer,* 1893. *Leka med Elden,* 1897. *Bandet,* 1897 (The Link). *Till Damaskus,* part I, *Till Damaskus,* part II, 1898. *Advent,* 1899 (Advent). *Brott och Brott,* 1899 (There are Crimes and Crimes). *Folkungsagen,* 1899. *Gustav Vasa,* 1899 (Gustavus Vasa). *Erik XIV,* 1899. *Gustav Adolf,* 1900. *Påsk,* 1901 (Easter). *Missommer,* 1901. *Dödsdansen,* part I, *Dödsdansen,* part II, 1901 (The Dance of Death). *Carl XII,* 1901. *Krombruden,* 1902 (The Bridal Crown). *Svanhvit,* 1902 (Swanwhite). *Drömspelet,* 1902 (The Dream Play). *Engelbrekt,* 1903. *Kristina,* 1903. *Gustav III,* 1903. *Näktergalen i Wittenberg,* 1903. *Till Damaskus,* part III, 1904. *Oväder,* 1907 (The Storm; The Thunderstorm). *Brända Tomten,* 1907 (After the Fire). *Spöksonaten,* 1907 (The Spook Sonata). *Pelikanen,* 1907. *Sista Riddaren,* 1909. *Abu Casems Toffler,* 1908. *Riksföreståndaren,* 1909. *Bjälbo-Jarlen,* 1909. *Svarta Handsken,* 1909. *Stora Landsvägen,* 1909.

ANTON TCHEKHOV

On the High Road, 1885 (On the High Road; On the Highway). *The Swan Song,* 1886 (The Swan Song). *Ivanov,* 1887 (Ivanov). *The Wood Demon,* 1888 (The Wood Demon). *The Bear,* 1888 (The Bear; The Boor). *The Proposal,* 1889 (The Proposal; A Marriage Proposal). *Tatyana Ripin,* 1889 (Tatyana Ripin). *The Wedding,* 1890 (The Wedding). *The Tragedian in Spite of Himself,* 1890 (The Tragedian in Spite of Himself; An Unwilling Martyr). *The Anniversary,* 1892 (The Anniversary; The Jubilee). *The Seagull,* 1896 (The Seagull). *Uncle Vanya,* 1897 (Uncle Vanya). *Three Sisters,* 1901 (Three Sisters). *The Cherry Orchard,* 1903 (The Cherry Orchard).

CHARLES VILDRAC

Le Paquebot Tenacity, 1920 (S. S. Tenacity; The Steamer Tenacity). *Michel Auclair,* 1923 (Michel Auclair). *Le Pelerin,* 1923. *Madame Béliard,* 1925.

FRANZ WEDEKIND

Die junge Welt, 1890. *Frühling's Erwachen,* 1891 (The Awakening of Spring). *Die Flöhe; oder, Der Schmerzentanz* [pantomime], 1892. *Erdgeist,* 1895 (Earth Spirit). *Die*

Kaiserin von Neufundland [pantomime], 1897. *Fritz Schwigerling,* 1899. *Der Kammersänger,* 1900 (The Court Singer; The Heart of a Tenor). *Der Marquis von Keith,* 1900. *Mine-Haha,* 1901. *Die Büchse der Pandora,* 1902 (Pandora's Box). *König Nikola; oder, So ist das Leben,* 1902 (Such is Life). *Hidalla* [Karl Hetman], 1904. *Totentanz* [Tod und Teufel], 1906 (Damnation; The Virgin and the White Slaver). *Musik,* 1907. *Die Zensur,* 1908. *Oaha* [*Till Eulenspiegel*], 1908. *Der Stein der Weisen,* 1909. *Franziska,* 1912. *Schloss Wetterstein,* 1913. *Simson; oder, Scham und Eifersucht,* 1914. *Bismarck,* 1915. *Herakles,* 1917. *Der Schellmaler,* 1920. *Lulu* [a rewritten version of *Erdgeist* and *Die Büchse der Pandora*].

APPENDIX II

BIBLIOGRAPHY

The classification used in this bibliography is of course not entirely logical; it represents merely an attempt toward an arrangement somewhat more specific than is customary, and hence may prove useful to the reader. Obviously, certain works would logically be listed under more than one heading; these have been classified according to their dominant elements.

The number of pages is stated not as a pedantic flourish but as suggesting the scope (certainly not the value) of the contents of the book. Names of publishers of British and American books are given as an additional means of identifying the book and of facilitating purchase.

Articles in magazines are cited only when there is a paucity of critical matter in book form, as, for instance, in the cases of Claudel, Vildrac, Capek, and Molnar. An excellent list of magazine references, treating many of the dramatists represented in this volume, is provided by Mr. Montrose J. Moses in his collection, *Representative Continental Dramas.*

THE MODERN DRAMA AND DRAMATISTS

General Surveys

Andrews, Charlton. The Drama of To-day. 236 pp. Philadelphia, 1913 (Lippincott).
A survey of certain types and tendencies.

Arnold, R. F. Das Moderne Drama. 388 pp. Strassburg, 1908.
Scholarly lectures on sources and ideas. Emphasis on German drama.

Bahr, Hermann. Expressionism. Translated by R. F. Gribble. 116 pp. London, 1925 (F. Henderson).
An exposition of the principles and practice of the latest method in dramaturgy.

Busse, B. Das Drama. Vol. III. 136 pp. Leipsig, 1914.
Brief criticisms of leading dramatists, grouped according to schools.

Carter, Huntley. The New Spirit in the European Theatre, 1914-1924. 292 pp. New York, 1926 (Doran).
The effect of the World War upon the matter and spirit of drama and upon the economics of production and stagecraft, together with a discussion of new tendencies.

Chandler, Frank W. Aspects of Modern Drama. 494 pp. New York, 1914 (Macmillan).
The principal themes of modern drama as treated by leading dramatists. Unique of its kind in English; both valuable and entertaining.

Dickinson, Thomas H. An Outline of Contemporary Drama. 299 pp. Boston, 1927 (Houghton).
The best book of its kind; highly condensed yet remarkably inclusive, and admirably written. Contains useful bibliographies and reading lists.

FRIED, ALFRED. Der Naturalismus; seine Entstehung und Berechtigung. 45 pp. Leipsig, 1890.

GOLDBERG, ISAAC. The Drama of Transition. 487 pp. Cincinnati, 1922 (Stewart Kidd).
An eclectic treatment of contemporary experimenters rather than a record of accepted achievements. Penetrating and brilliant.

HAMILTON, CLAYTON. The Theory of the Theatre. 248 pp. New York, 1910 (Holt).
Interesting articles on various phases of the drama and the theatre.

HENDERSON, ARCHIBALD. The Changing Drama. 320 pp. Cincinnati, 1919 (Stewart Kidd).
New tendencies in subject-matter, play form, and technique, without individual treatment of playwrights or plays.

JAMESON, STORM. The Modern Drama in Europe. 280 pp. New York, 1920 (Harcourt).
A survey of the principal phases, with criticism of representative dramatists, from the standpoint of a psychologist and philosopher.

LEWISOHN, LUDWIG. The Drama and the Stage. 245 pp. New York, 1922 (Harcourt).
Essays on various aspects of the contemporary drama and theatre.

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PFISTER, OSKAR R. Expressionism in Art; its Psychological and Biological Basis.
Translated from the German. London, 1922 (Kegan, Paul, Trench, Trubner).

RUBERTI, GUIDO. Il Teatro Contemporaneo in Europa. Vol. I, 454 pp. Vol. II, 495 pp. Bologna, 1920-1921.
Comprehensive but not scholarly; discusses individual dramatists.

STEIGER, EDGAR. Das Werden des Neueren Dramas. Vol. I, 355 pp.; Vol. II, 318 pp. Berlin, 1898-1903.
A general survey, but devotes 172 pages to Hauptmann.

VERNON, FRANK. The Twentieth Century Theatre. 158 pp. Boston, 1924 (Houghton).
An authentic and entertaining discussion of the conditions and influences in the pre-war theatre in England, with some reference to current tendencies.

ZABEL, E. Zur modernen Dramaturgie. Vol. 3, 457 pp. Oldenburg and Leipsig. 1903.
A miscellany of criticisms of playwrights of many periods.

ZOLA, ÉMILÉ. Le Naturalisme au Théâtre; les Théories et les Exemples. 56 pp. Paris, 1878. A recent edition, with notes and commentaries, 327 pp. Paris, 1928.
A standard work by the original proponent and practitioner of naturalism.

Criticism of Individual Dramatists

Björkman, Edwin. Voices of To-morrow. 328 pp. New York, 1913 (Kennerley).
Discusses Björnson, Maeterlinck, and Strindberg among the dramatists.

Dukes, Ashley. Modern Dramatists. 310 pp. Chicago, 1912 (Sergel).
Iconoclastic and brilliant criticism of the leading dramatists of Europe.

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Heller, Otto. Prophets of Dissent. 216 pp. New York, 1918 (Knopf).
A thoughtful treatment of Maeterlinck, Strindberg, Nietsche, and Tolstoi.

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A standard book by an honest as well as brilliant critic; includes Hauptmann, D'Annunzio, Maeterlinck, and Strindberg.

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A discussion of Pirandello and post-war French dramatists—Jean Jacques Bernard, Geraldy, Lenormand, Romains, and Serment. The only book on the latest developments in French drama.

Phelps, William Lyon. Essays on Modern Dramatists. 278 pp. New York, 1921 (Macmillan).
Includes Maeterlinck and Rostand from among the major continental dramatists.

Samuel, H. B. Modernities. 244 pp. New York, 1914 (Dutton).
A discussion of Schnitzler, Strindberg, Verhaeren, and Wedekind among the dramatists, and other writers.

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Courtney, W. L. The Development of Maurice Maeterlinck, and Other Sketches of Foreign Writers. 174 pp. London, 1904. (G. Richards)

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On various topics relating to the modern French theatre.

Séché, A., and Bertraut, J. L'Évolution de Théâtre Contemporain. 301 pp. Paris, 1908.
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NICOLL, ALLARDYCE. The Development of the Theatre. 247 pp. text; 271 plates. New York, 1927 (Harcourt).
A history of the architecture of the playhouse and the stage, and of the development of scenic art. Scholarly and thorough. Elaborately illustrated.

PICHEL, IRVING. Modern Theatres. 102 pp. New York, 1925 (Harcourt).
A practical work on modern theatre design and construction. Many illustrations and diagrams. Valuable.

WAUGH, FRANK A. Outdoor Theatres, Design, Construction, and Use. 151 pp. Boston, 1917 (Badger).

ACTING AND DIRECTING

ARCHER, WILLIAM. Masks or Faces? 232 pp. London, 1888 (Longmans).
A compilation of opinions by various writers, and at least as valuable as any book on acting.

BOSWORTH, HALLIAM. Technique in Dramatic Art. 438 pp. New York, 1926 (Macmillan).
A detailed and useful treatment, especially of the art of acting, with illustrations.

CALVERT, LOUIS. The Problems of the Actor. 274 pp. New York, 1918 (Holt).
One of the best books on the subject, by an able and successful actor.

CHALMERS, HELENA. The Art of Make-Up. 159 pp. New York, 1928 (Appleton).
The best of the manuals. Fully illustrated.

HOPKINS, ARTHUR. How's Your Second Act. 65 pp. New York, 1919 (Knopf).
A valuable discussion of the principles of directing by a successful producer.

HORNBLOW, ARTHUR. Training for the Stage. 193 pp. Philadelphia, 1916 (Lippincott).
Practical advice for the aspirant.

LEWES, GEORGE HENRY. On Actors and the Art of Acting. 237 pp. New York, 1878 (Holt).
Analyzes the art of many great actors of the nineteenth century. Still valuable.

STANISLAVSKY, CONSTANTIN. My Life in Art. 586 pp. Boston, 1927 (Little, Brown).
Is concerned with the theory and practice of acting and directing, as well as with the choice of plays, stage decoration, and kindred matters. Valuable as an expression of the experiences and judgments of one of the founders and directors of the Moscow Art Theatre.

THE ORGANIZATION OF THE THEATRE; THE RELATION OF THE THEATRE TO THE PUBLIC

ARCHER, WILLIAM, and GRANVILLE-BARKER, HARLEY. Scheme and Estimate for a National Theatre. 177 pp. London, 1907 (Duckworth).

BELASCO, DAVID. The Theatre through its Stage Door. 246 pp. New York, 1919 (Harper).
The theatre as seen by the foremost proponent of realism on the American stage.

CHENEY, SHELDON. The New Movement in the Theatre. 303 pp. New York, 1914 (Kennerley).
On organization, stagecraft, and the spirit of the theatre, etc.

DICKINSON, THOMAS H. The Insurgent Theatre. 251 pp. New York, 1917 (Viking).
New tendencies in organization and in the mutual relations of the theatre and the public.

FUCHS, GEORG. Die Revolution des Theatres. 291 pp. Munich and Leipsig, 1909.
Devoted principally to the Künstler Theater at Munich: its history, organization, methods of production, its playhouse and its stage.

GRANVILLE-BARKER, HARLEY. The Exemplary Theatre. 270 pp. Boston, 1922 (Little, Brown).
The educational possibilities of the theatre, by a celebrated dramatist and producer.

HOWE, PERCIVAL P. The Repertory Theatre: a Record and a Criticism. 242 pp. New York, 1911 (Kennerley).

KROWS, A. E. Play Production in America. 414 pp. New York, 1927 (Holt).
Commercial play production discussed in all its phases. Many illustrations.

MACCARTHY, DESMOND. The Court Theatre, 1904-1907. 169 pp. London, 1907 (A. H. Bullen).
A commentary on the achievements of the celebrated playhouse directed by Grein and Granville-Barker.

MACKAYE, PERCY. The Civic Theatre. 308 pp. New York, 1912 (Kennerley).
On the theatre as a democratic and communal institution.

MACKAYE, PERCY. The Playhouse and the Play. 210 pp. New York, 1909 (Macmillan).

ROLLAND, ROMAIN. The People's Theatre; translated from the French by Barrett H. Clark. 146 pp. New York, 1918 (Holt).

SAYLER, OLIVER. Inside the Moscow Art Theater. 240 pp. New York, 1925 (Brentano's).
A study of this organization from all points of view. Many fine illustrations both in color and in black and white.

STANISLAVSKY, CONSTANTIN. My Life in Art.
See under Acting and Directing.

THALASSO, A. Le Théâtre-Libre, 1887-1891: Essai Critique, Historique, et Documentaire. 299 pp. Paris, 1909.
An account of the origin, development, organization, and influence of the famous organization that originated and promoted the growth of naturalism and realism in recent French drama.

WAXMAN, SAMUEL M. Antoine and the Théâtre Libre. 247 pp. Cambridge, Mass., 1924 (Harvard Press).
Treats the same subject as Thalasso's book and covers much of the same ground.

THE PLAYGOER

AGATE, JAMES. Playgoing. 83 pp. New York, 1927 (Harper).
Entertaining reminiscences about native and foreign actors in important rôles.

BURTON, RICHARD. How to See a Play. 217 pp. New York, 1914 (Macmillan).
Play technique entirely from the point of view of the playgoer.

CAFFIN, CHARLES. The Appreciation of the Drama. 280 pp. New York, 1908 (Baker and Taylor).
A discussion helpful to the playgoer who wishes to know and like the best.

DUKES, ASHLEY. Drama. 256 pp. New York, 1926 (Holt).
Leads the playgoer to consider the dramatist, the actor, the producer, the scenic designer, the playhouse, and the audience.

DRINKWATER, JOHN. Theater-going. 217 pp. Boston, 1927 (Houghton).
The theatre in England of the present, with reference to theatre arts and with incidental discussion of plays, actors, dramatists, productions, conditions, and tendencies.

YOUNG, STARK. Theater. 182 pp. New York, 1927 (Doran).
Brief appraisals, from various points of view, of the play, the actor, the scenic designer, and the director.

THE STUDY OF THE DRAMA

BELLINGER, MARTHA FLETCHER. A Short History of the Drama. 469 pp. New York, 1927 (Holt).
A general, and necessarily condensed, survey from the beginnings to the present.

CLARK, BARRETT H. A Study of the Modern Drama. 527 pp. New York, 1928 (Appleton).
The fullest as well as the most useful work of its kind. Contains criticisms of and questions on 78 European and American plays by 61 different dramatists, with extensive and accurate lists of references and full bibliographies.

DICKINSON, THOMAS H. An Outline of Contemporary Drama.
See under General Surveys.

MATTHEWS, BRANDER. The Development of the Drama. 351 pp. New York, 1920 (Scribner's).
An excellent general survey that provides the essential background for the study of modern drama.

MATTHEWS, BRANDER. A Study of the Drama. 320 pp. Boston, 1910 (Houghton).
The best book on the principles of the drama.

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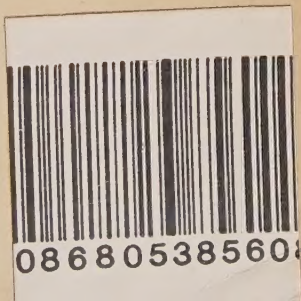

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